NORTH Dakota | Public Service Commission
Be Legendary.™

NEWS RELEASE
Nov. 16, 2026

For Immediate Release, Contact:
Randy Christmann, (701) 328-2400

PSC Receives High Marks on Federal Review of
Coal Regulatory and Abandoned Mine Lands Program

BISMARCK, ND – The North Dakota Public Service Commission's Coal Regulatory and Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) Program recently received results from its annual federal evaluation. The evaluation conducted by the federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) concluded that no issues or concerns were raised.

"The complimentary language in these reviews emphasizes the outstanding work our AML and Reclamation teams do throughout the year," said Commissioner Randy Christmann who holds the coal mining, reclamation, and abandoned mine lands portfolio. "Their efforts are assuring that North Dakota's landscape will be safe, productive, and beautiful for future generations."

Coal Regulatory Program:

The North Dakota Public Service Commission (NDPSC) is the state agency charged with the responsibility for the permitting and regulation of the coal mining industry in North Dakota. The Reclamation Division is responsible for administering and enforcing the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA). North Dakota currently has six active mining operations (4 lignite and 2 leonardite mines). More than 135,000 acres are currently permitted for mining. To date, more than 19,000 acres have received final bond release where Commission jurisdiction has ended. During the timeframe covered by this report, the program conducted 93 complete inspections and 415 partial inspections. The report noted that "this exceeds the number of inspections required and helps to demonstrate the state program's commitment to effective and thorough oversight of coal mining activities within the state of North Dakota."

In OSMRE's report, they reported that "The NDPSC staff continues to implement the program in a professional, cooperative, and fair manner. The Reclamation Division uses new technology to become more efficient and make information more readily available to the public. The NDPSC has the necessary technical expertise for carrying out its functions to ensure that all requirements of SMCRA are met."

The report also noted the program has a "very good working relationship with their customers that include industry, landowners, citizen groups, and other governmental agencies, including the OSMRE. The Reclamation Division carries out its duties using the appropriate technical expertise and with a high level of professionalism."

Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) Program:

The goal of this program is to eliminate hazards related to coal mining that was conducted prior to the enactment of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) of 1977. PSC staff in the AML program design and manage the reclamation projects, and then the actual reclamation work is done by contractors. Since the state program began in 1982, the North Dakota AML program has conducted more than 199 primary reclamation projects, 34 emergency projects and numerous construction maintenance and sinkhole filling projects. Approximately 42 miles of dangerous surface mine pits and highwalls, and more than 1,500 acres of underground mine subsidence have been reclaimed. The report noted that "these projects have reduced the likelihood of death or injury to property owners and the public."

OSMRE states in the report that "the state administers an excellent program in full compliance with their approved plan." Additional statements in the review include "the NDPSC continues to administer an efficient and successful program . . ." The NDPSC "is adhering to the state's policies and procedures regarding opportunities for public participation in all phases of their reclamation program."

The Commission receives funds from OSMRE for the AML program from the collection of a federal reclamation fee that is collected on all coal that has been mined since the late 1970s. The report highlights the efficient use of those funds in North Dakota stating "The NDPSC maintains a very cost-effective program with only 11% of the grant dedicated to administrative costs."

The North Dakota Public Service Commission is a constitutionally created state agency with authority to permit, site and regulate certain business activities in the state including electric and gas utilities, telecommunications companies, power plants, electric transmission lines, pipelines, railroads, commercial weighing devices, pipeline safety and coal mine reclamation. For more information, contact the Public Service Commission at (701) 328-2400 or www.psc.nd.gov.

###

Find us on Twitter: twitter.com/ndpsc or @NDPSC