



U.S. Office of Surface Mining

# News Release



For immediate release  
February 20, 2004

Contact: Joe Pally  
(202) 208-2565

## **OSM named “Supporting Organization of the Year” By nation’s Conservation and Development Districts**

The U.S. Office of Surface Mining has been named “Supporting Organization of the Year” for 2003 by the National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils.

The award is the highest recognition given by the NARC&D and recognizes the leadership role OSM has taken in its work with the RC&D community, specifically the Black Diamond RC&D Council, which coordinates community improvement projects across six counties in the coal country of southwestern Virginia.

Resource and Conservation Districts are nonprofit organizations supported by the US Department of Agriculture. OSM won the Virginia state award last year after being nominated by Black Diamond RC&D. Black Diamond recognized OSM "for its innovation and spirit, its outreach and team building and its commitment to local partnerships."

The award recognizes work on several specific partnership projects including: the Wise Legacy Wetlands Project treating Acid Mine Drainage in the center of the University of Virginia-Wise campus; the OSM/VISTA Initiative bringing full-time support to coal country watersheds; the Eastern Coal Region Roundtable bringing Federal agencies in closer contact with coal country watersheds; and the regional Acid Mine Drainage Conference.

“OSM has been a particularly valuable partner in several projects across the coalfields of Southwestern Virginia,” said Black Diamond RC&D Coordinator Blaine K. Delaney in a letter last year to OSM Director Jeff Jarrett. OSM, said Delaney, has contributed to “bringing cleaner water and community revitalization to our region.”

The award brings national attention to the significant cooperation that exists between OSM and RC&D Councils throughout the Appalachian coal states. National recognition of the role OSM can play in watershed improvement through partnerships with RC&D councils and the watershed groups they support will assist both agencies in bringing new partnerships and new strength to the effort to improve the quality of life in coal country.

Black Diamond’s nomination particularly praised the contributions of Dr. Allan Comp, Watershed Assistance Coordinator, and Ronnie Vicars, Clean Streams Coordinator for Virginia, who have been the lead staffers for OSM on Black Diamond’s projects.

“The President and Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton have directed us to work toward a new environmentalism built on partnerships and cooperative conservation,” said Jarrett. “It is gratifying to receive this kind of recognition from the people who are working in the communities and on the landscapes.”

**-OSM-**