

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE LAND RECLAMATIONISTS HISTORY AND MISSION

by

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Abstract

The National Association of State Land Reclamationists (NASLR) was formed in 1973 in response to a need for state reclamation personnel to exchange ideas to promote the state of the art. Since that time it has expanded to include corporate and federal persons employed in the profession. It has also established national awards for outstanding reclamation work by companies, and state reclamationists for exceptional work. A scholarship program has also been created.

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Introduction

Environmental awareness became an increasing issue in the late 60's and early 70's. Many of our current environmental laws have the origins in that time period. Many states had reclamation laws of some fashion prior to that time but were relatively weak by today's standards. A number of states had legislation pending to upgrade their reclamation laws and the rumblings of a federal law for coal were starting to be heard.

In 1971 the Interstate Mining Compact Commission began with a focus on the political aspects of reclamation laws, particularly those which were anticipated on the federal level. Chuck Medvick had come to the Illinois program from the coal association in Illinois. There he saw that the industry met periodically to exchange ideas. As the focus of the IMCC was primarily policy and the meetings were for policy makers, there was the need for the field people to meet and exchange ideas about the state of the art of reclamation from around the country. With the support of Gene Filer, administrator of the Illinois program and Tom Glover of the USBOM. NASLR had its conceptual meeting in 1972 when 25 regulators representing 14 states met in Illinois. It was decided to form an organization where they could exchange ideas on the state of the art of reclamation for mined lands. The primary target audience was state employed field personnel regulating reclamation for all minerals mined.

The first official meeting was the following year in Atlanta, Georgia. Sanford Darby of Georgia became the first president and Chuck Medvick became the first vice president and Mike Vaughn of Kentucky became the first

Secretary/Treasurer. An interesting note from the election was that although Ted Schwinden of Montana lost the election for the first presidency, he later went on to become Governor of Montana. A constitution was adopted patterned after the one of the National Association of State Foresters. That same year the parent group of ASSMR met, a similar organization which included researchers and company personnel with its origins in the Appalachia region.

Mission and Philosophy

The mission statement of NASLR summarizes the goals and philosophy of the organization and is as follows:

- As a nationally recognized authority on the reclamation of mined lands, the National Association of State Land Reclamationists (NASLR) advocates the use of research, innovative technology and professional discourse to foster the restoration of lands and waters affected by mining related activities.
- NASLR recognizes that economically beneficial mining operations and sound land reclamation need not be exclusive of each other. As such, NASLR strives to promote and maintain a mutually beneficial relationship between state regulatory authorities and the mining community.
- NASLR promotes the formulation of lasting partnerships between state land reclamationists, private mining groups and other interested parties to discuss, encourage, endorse and sponsor programs that will advance the art and science of land reclamation.

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- NASLR recognizes that geographic and political differences between states can dictate the structure of a state's reclamation program. Therefore, NASLR does not compare state programs, but encourages the exchange of information and expertise in an effort to continually improve the quality and environmental integrity of land reclamation throughout the country.

Membership and Activities

Membership in NASLR begins with the reclamation agency, which if it joins, entitles state employees to be full members. Full or individual members are entitled to vote at the annual meetings. With the passage of the national coal reclamation law, SMCRA, many reclamation people left the states to join the federal Office of Surface Mining. Due to early adversarial state-federal relationships in the first decade of SMCRA, few of these new federal reclamation workers maintained their membership.

Over time NASLR membership has been enlarged to include corporate members and federal reclamationists, although their membership is as an associate status. One province in Canada has state membership status. University researchers as state employees, may be full members if the state reclamation agency is a state member, if not, then they have associate status.

The 1999 meeting in Charleston, South Carolina will be the 27th annual conference. Over the years we have held meetings and visited the field in nineteen different states and have elected presidents from fourteen.

In 1983, NASLR initiated a Reclamationist of the Year Award, nominations for this award must come from an agency administrator wishing to have the employee honored for some aspect to advancing reclamation in that state. Only 10 persons have received the award to date. In 1987, a award was established for outstanding reclamation work by a mining company. Competition for this award is increasing every year. NASLR began its scholarship program in 1995 by allocating \$5000 of its treasury for an annual grant of \$1000 for a college student studying in the reclamation field. So far two recipients have received this grant.

A number of years ago NASLR found the need to have an executive secretary to be responsible for the quarterly newsletter, to have a permanent mailing address and to ensure continuity from year to year. This person is now also responsible for the maintenance of the web site at <http://www.siu.edu/~coalctr/naslr.htm> where all

information, forms and recent newsletters may be found. Charlie Hooks of Southern Illinois University is the current Executive Secretary.

Currently there are 22 states and one province which have state membership. There is a significant number of corporate sponsors and individual members for the states. NASLR maintains an active group of individuals responsible for the exchange of information through our newsletter and annual meeting and field trip. Each State is asked to provide at least one article per year of new ideas, innovative solutions for problems or what is happening in both the mining industry and the agency. The newsletter serves as a forum for contacts to ask for solutions to field and administrative issues. Reclamation position want ads may be posted for no cost to members.

Conclusion

The organization has been an effective tool for advancing communication in the field of reclamation and looks forward to future endeavors in the next century.

