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Buchanan County Students Take Part in Reclamation at Annual Arbor Day Event

Buchanan County, Va.- Nearly 300 Buchanan County 6th grade students helped with reclamation at a former coal mine site in Buchanan County, Virginia. The students planted 750 trees at the nationally awarded Hawks Nest mine site near Poplar Gap Park. Oaks, redbuds, flowering crab apples and blight resistant American chestnuts now cover a portion of the previously mined site.

The annual Arbor Day event, hosted by the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME), The Virginia Coal and Energy Alliance (VCEA) and the Virginia Oil and Gas Association (VOGA) teaches students about the importance of environmental protection during and after coal mining and natural gas production is complete. This is the 12th Arbor Day celebration.

“Protecting the environment is one of the main missions of DMME” said DMME Deputy Director, Butch Lambert. “What better way to ensure that mission than to teach these students the importance of returning the land to what it once was by giving them hands on experience planting trees.”

Since Arbor Day began in 2005 over 7,000 trees have been planted on 20 acres of mined land. That land will once again become a forest thanks to the work of students across southwest Virginia.

Awards were also presented at the event for student artwork and excellence in reclamation.

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Students submitted artwork based on the theme, “Planting Trees for the Next Generation”. Emilee Potter, a student at Riverview Elementary/Middle School took top prize.

Red River Coal Company was recognized for its work in using the forestry reclamation approach. The company planted several trees on land that was previously mined for coal.

GOBCO was also awarded for using the forestry reclamation approach on an abandoned mine land project, the Bearwallow Gob Pile Removal Project.

The event was sponsored by: Alpha Natural Resources, Artemis Consulting Services, LLC, Cambrian Coal Group/Clintwood Elkhorn, Coal Mining Engineering Services LLC, GOBCO, Noah Horn, The Office of Surface Mining, Red River Coal, Richard Davis, Southwest Virginia Sportsmen, Virginia Department of Forestry, VCEA, VOGA and DMME.

This is the third year the event has been held on the Hawks Nest mine site. The site is owned by Paramount Coal and was awarded by the National Association of State Land Reclamationists, the federal Office of Surface Mining and the Interstate Mining Compact Commission. The land was reclaimed to include a park, subdivision, industrial park and miles of roadbed.

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