

Issue 6

January 2011

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT FOR NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural Resources Review



**Photo: Charlie Hoskins, Inspector
Middlesboro DMRE Regional Office**

MISSION STATEMENT

The department, through its divisions and partnerships, provides technical assistance, education and funding to help landowners, institutions, industries, and communities in conserving and sustaining Kentucky's natural resources. In addition, the department inspects timber harvests and mining operations to ensure the protection of our citizens, our environment, and our workers.



Commissioner's Corner

**By Carl E. Campbell, Commissioner
Department for Natural Resources**

Dear colleagues,

As we begin a new year, I want to recap a few of the remarkable accomplishments that DNR employees made in 2010. Your exceptional teamwork and cooperation resulted in the following notable achievements:

- Significant improvement in reducing the number of delinquent coal mine permit applications from a high of 179 in November 2009 to 39 on Jan. 12, 2011.
- The Division of Mine Permits, with funding from both OSM and EPA, developed a new Cumulative Hydrologic Impact Assessment (CHIA) protocol to assess the impact of coal mining on watersheds.
- The Division of Forestry (KDF) submitted to the U.S. Forest Service the 2010 Kentucky Statewide Assessment of Forest Resources and Strategy: A Comprehensive Analysis and Plan for Action, which provides the foundation for executing Kentucky's forest program for the next five years.
- The KDF obtained two new land acquisitions, increasing the number of state-managed forests to 9 incorporating 41,044 acres.
- The Division of Conservation announced the addition of 19,889.7 acres (571 individual contracts) into the Green River Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), which is designed to protect this ecological sensitive watershed. These latest acquisitions bring the cumulative total to 101,303 acres.
- The Heritage Land Conservation Fund was responsible for conserving 2,721 acres of unique lands in 12 different counties. This brings their total acres protected to 38,642.
- The Office of Mine Safety and Licensing (OMSL) successfully completed a mandate by the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) to conduct multiple annual visits to all underground mines for which OMSL teams provide mine rescue team coverage.
- A technical study group comprised of regulators, industry, and environmental groups completed the development of the Fill Placement Optimization Process (FPOP), a design protocol created to minimize the impact on streams from mining operations. A significant step forward in stream protection, the process has been recognized and used as a national model.
- The Division of Mine Reclamation and Enforcement implemented a new policy that resulted in a major decrease in the number of blasting flyrock events, thus significantly improving the safety of surface mining operations.
- The Division of Abandoned Mine Lands reclaimed 507 acres of mined lands where insufficient reclamation or abandonment by the mining company resulted in significant environmental degradation. Installation of 64.7 miles of waterline was completed providing potable water for 741 households in six counties.
- The Division of Oil and Gas submitted to the EPA's Region 4 a request to assume primacy of the regulation of the Underground Injection Control Program for Class II wells.

Your work resulted in the department ending the year with a significant legacy of achievements and service to our constituents. I would like to personally thank you for your efforts and look forward to another remarkable year ahead.

Secretary Peters Visits Division of Permits

Dr. Peters expresses appreciation to the employees of the division for a job well done

On Nov. 29, 2010, Secretary Len Peters met with Division of Mine Permits (DMP) personnel to congratulate them on their efforts in streamlining the permit review process. Retirements and personnel reductions in 2008 had taken a huge toll on the division in terms of expertise, resulting in a significant backlog of permitting actions. Thanks to new leadership, coupled with determined and focused staff, measures were instituted that resulted in getting permits moving so that they could be addressed within their regulatory time frames.

Concurrently, new permit fees were authorized providing funding for the hiring of additional staff. Training sessions were ramped up and reviewers volunteered to come in on Saturdays to expedite the review and clear the backlog. Excellent progress indeed! The number of delinquent permits went from 179 on Nov. 1, 2009 to 39 on Jan. 12, 2011.

Secretary Peters, pictured with a visual aid behind him, praises the employees for their achievements. The graph, pictured behind him, illustrates the dramatic drop in delinquent permits (blue line) being processed by the DMP.



The group of nearly 100 listens to Peters as he congratulates them on the accomplishment and its impact.

Saving Seed

by Lynn True

The Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF) has operated and maintained two seedling nurseries – John P. Rhody in western Kentucky and Morgan County Nursery in eastern Kentucky – for over 50 years. In this time, landowners, resource agencies and communities have come to rely on the high-quality seedlings for a variety of reforestation projects.

Although the nurseries are a critical part of KDF's mission, funding to operate and maintain these facilities has become a challenge. In fact, in the last few years, reductions have made significant changes for nursery operations – including the way the nurseries get seed. In the past, KDF purchased most of the needed seed from contractors. In recent years, however, collecting and saving seed has become an additional responsibility for the division. Nowadays, it is not uncommon for KDF personnel to take to the woods for a few days of seed collecting.



Ben Ueltschi, KDF forester, collects bur oak seed at the Lexington Cemetery.

Each fall, KDF personnel – ranging from office support to service foresters – commit a day or two to collecting seed. Seed collecting, though time-consuming, is a testament of the division's staff to save money and maintain the nurseries. Both nurseries are capable of growing 3 to 4 million seedlings annually and this year, the division was slated to collect nearly 25,000 pounds of seed from various species of oak, hickory, walnut, ash, flowering dogwood and redbud.

Although seed collecting is finished by late autumn, nursery operations continue throughout the year. Nursery workers spend a considerable amount of time drying, processing and storing the seed to prepare them for germination. As part of the process, nursery workers also amend and improve soils, irrigate beds and fertilize the developing plants throughout the year. Finally, after a year of growth, bare-root seedlings are lifted, packaged and distributed to the public.

Although seedling sales begin in the early fall and continue through late spring, public inquiries about seedlings are often year-round. For more information about the state nurseries or to obtain a seedling order form, visit the KDF Web site at <http://forestry.ky.gov/> or contact the main office at 1-800-866-0555.



KDF employees, Pam Snyder and Alice Mandt, sort through a pile of seed for optimal selection.



KDF employees, Strider Deaver and Alice Mandt bundle bur oak seeds for delivery to the Morgan County Nursery.

Coordinated Effort Between Agencies—Response to Accidents

Divisions/ MSHA come together to look after safety of employees after drilling accident

By Evan Satterwhite

On Jan. 12, miners working underground at a Hopkins County mine detected methane gas in an abandoned area of the mine and were immediately evacuated. The coal company brought in a rig to drill boreholes so that sampling rods could be inserted to monitor the mine's atmosphere. Before the drill could penetrate the coal seam, it hit a pocket of gas at 400 feet, igniting the gas and sending a fireball into the atmosphere. Two driller operators were burned but were able to get away from the fire.

Manitou Fire/ Hopkins County fire and emergency responders as well as mine

safety officials were called to the scene. The two employees were taken to the hospital and treated for first-degree and second-degree burns.



Immediately following the accident, company officials, MSHA, and experienced officials from the Office of Mine Safety and Licensing and the Division of Oil and Gas responded. Flames continued to shoot 15 feet in the air into the following day before the gas burned down to a manageable level. Shorts Oil Field Well Service, an independent contractor whose expertise is extinguishing fires of this type, was called in by the company. On Jan. 14, the fire was out and the bore hole had been plugged using 110 sacks of cement to permanently seal the well. Mining operations ceased during the plugging of the hole through the following weekend until the seals cured.

The experience of everyone involved proved helpful in ensuring the well-being of the miners in the area as well as those operating the drill rig.

Other Kentucky Oil and Gas Facts

Current number of abandoned wells: 13,044

Current number of active tank batteries: 7,840

2010 bond forfeitures: 23 forfeitures worth \$36,500

Jeff Laird, GIS Specialist Division of Mine Permits

Born to a Navy family at Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland, Jeff Laird had crossed the Atlantic and back by plane, crossed the Pacific and back by ship, lived in Europe, Asia, and both coasts of North America by the time he was 12. He has participated in expeditions to the magnetic North Pole and the Mojave Desert, driven cattle for a week in Montana and reached the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro.

Jeff has 26 years of experience in the design, implementation, customization, operation and administration of geographic information systems (GIS) and automated mapping. He moved to Frankfort in 1991 to work for a GIS consulting firm and worked on over 30 GIS projects in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, four Canadian provinces and most of the states in the United States.

In 1998, he joined Bluegrass GIS as senior vice president and worked on projects in the United States, Armenia, Oman, and Romania.

With his Army contract ending after eight years and not wanting to move, Jeff was looking for a group engaged in environmental-related activities that could use his skill set. Fortunately, he found the GIS Section of the Division of Mine Permits. He was immediately attached to the section specializing in cumulative hydrologic impact assessment (CHIA). Utilizing his leadership, the GIS section made remarkable progress this past year by characterizing over 345 HUC12 watersheds that includes over 1,500 maps.

“I have found the work to be very challenging and enjoy supporting environmental scientists again. I especially enjoy working with the other GIS professionals in the section,” said Jeff.

“Currently, we are working on projects helping industry submit GIS-ready data to enhance the permit review process, and another that establishes trend station monitoring sites on selected waterways that will yield sample results data that can be modeled using three-dimensional GIS tools.”

He enthusiastically continues, “One of the most fortunate things about working in GIS is the fact that upper management here “gets it” about GIS technology and the limitless advantages it affords. For a GIS guy, the

hat-trick of being able to work in an environment that includes professional colleagues, challenging projects, and GIS enlightened management is a rare find indeed. I am grateful to have found a home at DNR and plan on finishing my career here at Hudson Hollow.”

Jeff received his Bachelor of Arts in Geography and the University Certificate in Cartography

at George Mason University in 1984. Other certifications include: ASPRS certified mapping scientist GIS/LIS, GISCI certified GIS professional, HAZWOPER certified national spill school at Corpus Christie, certified SCUBA diver, certified sky diver and Black Belt Tae Kwon Do (ITA).

His interests are just as varied. He enjoys discussing philosophy and is an amateur historian with an emphasis on military and British history. Other passions include acoustic guitar, reading, travelling, visiting the beach and working out at the downtown YMCA in Frankfort.



Mine Permits Employee Recognized for Exemplary Accomplishments

Davie Ransdell completes Certified Public Manager Program/receives national award for project

Davie Ransdell started her career with the Commonwealth of Kentucky in 1987 as a reclamation inspector in the Pikeville Regional Office and stayed in that position until 1990. In 2006, she was selected for a supervisory role in the Division of Mine Permits where she has excelled in supervising and leading her team to many accomplishments. In 2007, Davie was accepted into the Certified Public Manager Program (CPM). Started in 1995 by then Gov. Paul Patton, the program was designed to develop highly trained, experienced, and qualified candidates to meet the future challenging management needs of state government. The certification is recognized by the American Association of Certified Public Managers.

Davie's CPM group, Cohort 3, completed the required training and education that led to their eventual graduation in December 2009. Completing the curriculum required by the Governmental Services Center (GSC) would normally be equivalent to a Kentucky State University Business Management Degree. For state employees who participate, the course work is recognized as two years of additional administrative experience, an advantage when applying for many state government positions.

During the final stages of the CPM program, the students who work in small groups are assigned projects, called capstones. Davie's project was entitled Oversight of Online/Distance Education Providers in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The completed project was submitted to the Proprietary Education Board and

has been very helpful in evaluating future needs and comparing Kentucky's program to other states. The project was innovative, demonstrated a cost savings, and was an improvement to the program. Davie was honored with the George Askew Award, given to those who have been acknowledged for demonstrating exemplary work in the completion of their projects while pursuing their certification. This award is named for George C Askew, who was the first person to receive CPM certification in 1976. The medallion states, "For the utilization of management practices exemplifying the philosophy of the American Academy of Certified Public Managers in the completion of an exceptional curriculum project."

Today, Davie continues in her role as a supervisor in the Division of Mine Permits. She has been married to her husband Tom (another state employee) for 22 years and has a son Thomas, 12 years old. Congratulations Davie on your award!



Davie Ransdell (left) receives the award presented by Tony Smith, awards chair of the Kentucky Society Certified Public Managers.

Kentucky Awarded \$3 Million in the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative

Three projects will be active in restoring water quality and habitat in the Mississippi River Basin

The Kentucky Conservation Partnership will receive \$3 million over a five-year period to complete three projects to improve the health of the Mississippi River Basin. The projects will take place in three major watersheds of the state: Licking River, Lower Green, and the Bayou de Chien/Mayfield Creek.

The Kentucky Division of Conservation worked with several partners to secure \$500,000 for each project during the first year. Partner agencies include the Nature Conservancy, Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Kentucky Division of Forestry, Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission, Kentucky Cattleman's Association, Kentucky Corn Growers Association, USDA Resource Conservation and Development, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Kentucky Division of Water, University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension and the U. S. Geological Survey.

In a recent press release, Kentucky's Energy and Environment Cabinet Secretary Len Peters said the focus of the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watershed Initiative is to improve water quality and the overall health of the Mississippi River Basin. "This program will help agriculture producers in the watersheds implement conservation and management practices that avoid, control, and trap nutrient runoff.

"The initiative is performance oriented and measureable results are required to participate, including the reduction of environmental impacts through more efficient use of nutrients in crop and livestock production," said Peters.

An additional \$500,000 will be made available for each project in the next four years to agriculture producers in the chosen watersheds through the Soil Erosion and Water Quality Cost Share Program. The additional money will be used for extended projects not included in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program that focus on precision nutrient management and farming incentives.

For more information contact Steve Coleman, director of the Kentucky Division of Conservation at 502-573-3080 or e-mail him at steve.coleman@ky.gov. More information about the initiative can be found at www.ky.nrcs.usda.gov/programs.

A groundbreaking ceremony was held Dec. 10, 2010 to mark the beginning of the \$450,000 second phase rehabilitation project on the North Fork Little River MPS #5 also known as Lake Blythe. This structure is one of four watershed structures built under the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act to provide flood protection as well as fish and wildlife benefits. Lake Blythe is located approximately 4 miles north of Hopkinsville and controls runoff from over 17,000 acres protecting approximately 600 acres of land.



Vernal Ponds Spring to Life on State Forestlands

By Lynn True

In addition to assisting landowners, advising communities, fighting wildfires, inspecting timber harvests and growing tree seedlings, the Division of Forestry (KDF) provides a service that largely remains one of our best kept secrets – managing nearly 42,000 acres of forestland. Currently, the division manages nine state-owned forests for the purpose of promoting good forestry practices. These forestlands are managed to ensure biological diversity and sustainable use; therefore, a recent wetland initiative in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service and the Kentucky Department for Natural Resources (DNR) was an easy fit.

DNR's initiative to develop small wetlands, also known as vernal ponds, was especially suited for state forestlands that do not have naturally wet areas. In fact, vernal ponds were already constructed at Tygart's State Forest in northeastern Kentucky several years ago. The ponds at Tygart's were created to help diversify forest wildlife and to make up for a lack of surface water due to karst topography.

As a result of DNR's new initiative, a vernal pond was also recently constructed at Knobs State Forest in Bullitt County. This site was chosen because of the area's flashy hydrology – where water levels rise during heavy rainfalls, but run off just as quickly. KDF foresters agreed that the addition of a small pond in this area would serve well as a habitat for terrestrial amphibians and other forest wildlife.

Although the importance of vernal ponds is often overlooked, a closer look reveals just how significant this habitat is to a forest community. Approximately one-half of all frogs and one-third of all salamander species rely on these temporary wetlands for development, as noted in [A Guide to Creating Vernal Ponds](#) by Tom Biebighauser, a wildlife biologist with the U.S. Forest Service Daniel Boone National Forest. Biebighauser also discusses how to build and maintain vernal ponds in his publication.

The effects of vernal ponds are complex; however, the science of these small, ephemeral wetlands is really somewhat simple.

Vernal ponds typically form in early spring (vernal) from snowmelt and rainwater. Most pools are dry for at least part of the year, but some remain partially filled with water over the course of a year or more. All vernal ponds, however, dry up periodically and therefore, they are usually devoid of fish.

The lack of fish and higher order predators make them especially suitable for terrestrial amphibians like spotted salamanders and spring peepers. Crustaceans such as fairy shrimp, aquatic insects such as dragonflies, and mollusks such as snails also rely on these pools. The pools serve as a safe breeding ground for these critters to lay eggs, develop from larvae, seek shelter and find food.



Salamander eggs found in vernal ponds have a greater chance of survival due to lack of fish and higher order predators found in deeper, permanent ponds.



Vernal ponds located in woodlands provide critical habitat for terrestrial amphibians.

Metal Thieves Hit AML Waterline Projects

Division of Abandoned Mine Lands deals with theft of critical materials on job sites

The Division of Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) fund several waterline projects each year in areas that have groundwater degradation due to mining that occurred prior to May 1982. For many years residents of these impacted areas have had to use expensive filtration systems to make the groundwater usable. When clean, affordable, and reliable water is delivered into someone's home, the benefits to the residents are enormous and well received.

The recent spike in the price of scrap metal has caused rural waterlines and their associated infrastructure to be attractive targets for thieves. Many of AML's water district partners are finding anything made of metal disappears, in particular water meter and valve lids. These lids are very important to the proper function and long-term life of these features. They prevent freezing and the subsequent bursting of the waterlines in cold weather. Recently, these brazen crooks went so far as to actually dig out two air release valves on a rural AML waterline to get the brass for scrap.



The metal lids on rural meters are often targeted.



Valve lids, such as this, disappear.

Here are some facts about the Kentucky Human Resources Information System (KHRIS)

Coming soon for all state employees!

KHRIS will streamline data, improve security, and provide employees access to their personal information.

- Choose paper or electronic pay statements.
- Access leave balances and overtime request forms electronically.
- Update address, tax and bank account information in a secure online environment.
- View name, birthday, and other personal information online.
- View time and pay statements, leave balances, and benefit elections online.

KHRIS will provide a single source for human resource data, eliminating more than 25 systems.

Mine Rescue Competition 2010

Madisonville was overall winner in OMSL Mine Rescue Finals

Each year OMSL's 12 mine rescue teams participate in an interagency mine rescue contest. Conducted under OMSL mine rescue team and command center training manual rules, the contests are conducted at one of OMSL's three 23-acre mine rescue fields. The contest rules are designed to simulate, as close as possible, actual mine rescue scenarios. OMSL mine rescue teams are committed to achieving a heightened state of readiness should Kentucky miners need help.

The OMSL Mine Rescue Finals were held on Oct. 27, 2010 at the Madisonville District mine rescue field. The finale was comprised of the Region 1 winner, Barbourville competing against the Region 2 winner, which was Madisonville. Although both teams were highly effective, it was the Madisonville team that won the competition. Once again, each team that competed did an exceptional job and demonstrated the skill sets needed in case of an actual mine rescue emergency.



Pictured left to right: Secretary Len Peters, Madisonville district supervisor Ronnie Drake, OMSL Executive Director Johnny Greene and Deputy Commissioner Larry Arnett. Ronnie Drake receiving award from Secretary Peters.



Barbourville team advancing with smoke blinders on face mask.



Madisonville team spreading out and advancing in mine.

Congratulations to all teams and thanks for your readiness!

USEPA/Division of Oil and Gas Plugging Program

Kentucky partners with federal agency in the plugging of abandoned oil and gas wells

By Marvin Combs

The Kentucky Division of Oil and Gas (DOG) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 4 have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to plug abandoned Class II injection wells in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. These wells are used for enhanced oil and gas recovery, brine disposal, or hydrocarbon storage and remain under federal jurisdiction.

Federal regulations require Class II well operators to maintain financial responsibility to plug their wells upon completion of injection operations. When a well is abandoned by an operator, those funds can be recovered by USEPA and used for plugging and abandonment remediation.

Under the terms of the MOU, the division inspected all Class II abandoned wells and prioritized each well for plugging based on potential adverse impact to the environment and public safety. Twenty-nine of the abandoned Class II wells, originally operated as injection for enhanced oil recovery, were selected and have been incorporated into the division's "State-Bid" Plugging Program. They are being plugged in conjunction with the plugging of abandoned conventional oil and gas wells.

Following plugging and site remediation, the division provides documentation to USEPA which includes the plugging affidavit, plugging invoice, bid-contractor award letter, and the tabulated costs of all submitted bids.

Upon receipt of plugging documentation from the Division of Oil and Gas, USEPA will direct the bank or financial institution that holds financial responsibility to reimburse DOG for plugging and remediation operations. In addition to recouping the cost of plugging the well, the division will receive a payment of 5 percent of the invoice for administering and supervising the plugging operation.



Class A cement displaced in casing of Permit N17650 (final stage of plugging), permanently plugging the well.



The plugging and abandonment operation of permit N17650 performed by Kirby Drilling.

AmeriCorps Volunteers in Trainee Program Offer Unique Help to DNR

By Linda Potter

The AmeriCorps Regulatory Trainee Program, funded by the Office of Surface Mining (OSM) and administered by the Southwest Conservation Corps, was designed in 2010 to give recent college graduates experience working for state agencies on tasks related to surface coal mining. The program offers benefits to both students and the agencies that employ them. The “volunteers” hope to obtain permanent employment with a state agency, which is rewarded with a pool of prospective employees with relevant experience. There are 20 trainees participating in this program across the country in 10 states. AmeriCorps and OSM held training sessions in various



Aaron Melton and Alan Lafferty working on a GIS/ topographic map at the Division of Mine Permits office in Frankfort.

locations around the country so that students could learn about the volunteer program and the different facets of coal mining including the implementation of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA). Kentucky was very fortunate to land two trainees in the Division of Mine Permits: Alan Lafferty and Aaron Melton. Lafferty trained in West Virginia and Melton trained in Colorado. Sessions with Al Whitehouse, chief of OSM’s Division of Reclamation Support proved informative and impressive while Craig Clark, deputy ethics counselor for OSM presented a rundown on ethical issues faced by OSM and the federal government, with an emphasis on the mining industry.

Work for these trainees at the Division of Mine Permits consists of digitizing mine features on quadrangles ranging from the early 1960s to 2000. These features are being digitized and sent to the Kentucky Geological Survey (KGS) at the University of Kentucky in order to create a statewide map showing surface mining features of each quadrangle throughout the state. They are also geo-referencing mine reclamation plan maps for mine permit reviewers.

Lafferty is a native of Shelby County and graduated from Western Kentucky University with a Bachelor of Science in geography in May 2010. When asked about his experience, he enthusiastically offered, “I am excited to be able to stay in my home state and consider it a privilege to serve the people of this great state. This experience is a geographer’s dream.”

A Grant County native, Melton graduated from the University of Kentucky with a degree in civil engineering. He passionately describes his job here. “I take scanned images from old mylars of existing, permitted mine locations and features and then digitize them in ArcGIS. The files that I am creating will be available online (Kentucky Geological Survey’s site) for everyone to view. My efforts provide a more informative geographical orientation of what has been previously mined.” He smiled and continued, “If we know what has been mined, we will know what needs to be reclaimed. If we know what needs to be reclaimed, we will keep Kentucky beautiful.”

Extension of AML Emergency Agreement

Linda Potter

Thirty years ago, coal mining practices in Kentucky, West Virginia and other coal region states produced several environmental problems: landslides, stream pollution, and dangerous highwalls. Since 1977, the Kentucky Division of Abandoned Mine Lands Program (KDAML) has mitigated many of these serious problems by reclaiming abandoned mine sites. Funding for the reclamation of these areas comes from fees paid by coal operators based on their tonnage production. Occasionally, emergency situations associated with coal mining arise that require immediate attention and remediation. Since the AML program was formed, the federal Office of Surface Mining (OSM) has operated the emergency AML reclamation program in Kentucky.



Emergencies such as this one requires AML investigation/ authorization for the repairs to be covered under the new procedures.

However, the President Obama's 2011 submitted budget proposes to eliminate funding for this vital program and the issue has become a hot topic. Governor Beshear and two other coal state governors weighed in opposing the transfer of this responsibility to the states. Since Congress has not yet passed a 2011 budget, OSM's funding for emergency work is in limbo. Beginning in October 2010, the cabinet and OSM entered into a cooperative agreement to continue the emergency program until Congress acts on a budget. The agreement required OSM to continue administering emergency projects while the KDAML pays the cost of constructing the projects. This agreement was originally set to expire on Nov. 30, 2010, but that deadline was subsequently extended to March 7, 2011. That is the date that the current continuing resolution approved by Congress is set to expire.

If Congress does not fund the OSM emergency program, the Commonwealth will be left with little choice but to assume this major responsibility. The resulting shift of OSM's emergency responsibilities to Kentucky will be difficult to absorb both logistically and financially for the KDAML. While the Department for Natural Resources hopes Congress will pass the 2011 federal budget and maintain the funding to OSM for administering the program, DNR has taken steps to make the transition less painful if the shift occurs.

KDAML has made progress in the following areas.

- Established a toll-free number for public use to report emergencies.
- Established an in-house, 24/7 on-call rotation schedule.
- Participated in subsidence and landslide training.
- Assumed responsibility to conduct initial emergency complaint investigations.
- Developed statements of work for emergency contract inspections.
- Consulted the Finance and Administration Cabinet to streamline emergency contracting procedures.

The division continues to make contingency plans regarding staffing and infrastructure in the event that the 2011 federal budget requires KDAML to assume the emergency program.

Mine Safety 2010– a closer look

Accomplishments hope to bring increased safety to miners in 2011

Number of Mines

At the beginning of 2010, the number of coal mines licensed by the Office of Mine Safety and Licensing (OMSL) had decreased substantially to 361, due in part to a sluggish economy and the lessening demand for coal. Of these, 172 were underground operations and 189 were surface mining operations. As the year progressed, the number continued to rise and by the end of 2010, the number of licensed mines had reached 467. Of these, 196 were underground operations and 271 were surface mining operations.

Training

During 2010, the OMSL Division of Safety Analysis, Training and Certification served the Kentucky mining industry by training and/or testing 28,907 Kentucky miners at six district offices. Also provided was a required six-hour annual retraining for 5,004 certified mine foremen. Of these, 2,268 were surface foremen and 2,736 were underground foremen.

Safety analysts observed 10,734 miners performing their duties both inside and outside operating mines. Unsafe acts totaling 2,081 were observed and discussed with the appropriate miner or supervisor since they may have caused a mining injury/accident if not corrected.

Drug Free Work Place program

Last year, 1,329 miners were reported by the coal industry for violating their drug-free status. Consequently, 229 were placed on probation by the Mine Safety Review Commission and allowed to return to work in the industry. An additional 371 miners returned to work as a result of completing their probationary period. The goal of the Drug-Free Work Place is not to permanently ban miners from the mining industry, but to ensure these miners receive the help they need and remain drug free when they come back to the industry.

Mine Inspection

The Division of Safety Inspection and Licensing completed all underground and surface inspections mandated by the federal Miner Act. A total of 4,139 mine safety inspections including analysts' observations and safety meetings were conducted.

Rescue Teams

OMSL's 12 mine rescue teams will have completed all of its MSHA training, contest, and mine visit mandates by June 17, 2011 and will continue to provide signature mine rescue coverage to the Kentucky mining industry.

Aerial Detection Effective Tool for Division of Forestry – Quick Response Quells Wildfire in Hart County

By Lynn True

In Kentucky, the potential for wildfire typically peaks in late October, and this year extreme dry weather and unusually warm temperatures made for exceptionally dangerous fire conditions. Such was the case on Oct. 24, 2010 in the area of Knoxes Creek in Hart County. In addition to the dry environment, wind gusts in excess of 20 mph had the potential to turn any spark into a raging wildfire. Fortunately, the Kentucky Division of Forestry's (KDF) Central District was conducting aerial detection that afternoon as part of its efforts to find and control

wildfires. While surveying the 15-county area, Robert Bean, chief forester for the division, spotted a small plume of smoke. Bean quickly radioed the location to Central District dispatch noting that a power line had blown over in a field causing dry brush and grass to ignite.

Once Steve Gray, KDF district forester, received the information from Bean, he immediately recognized the area as being adjacent to woodland belonging to Dr. James Middleton. Both Gray and Bean have worked with Dr. Middleton for many years – marking timber, conducting timber stand improvement and assisting with other forest stewardship practices. In fact, Dr. Middleton's long-time association with district staff dates back to the late 80's when he was named Tree Farmer of the Year for his accomplishments in forestry.

Gray, familiar with the area was able to direct KDF fighters and local volunteer fire departments into the area quickly. He knew a wildfire in that area had the potential to destroy hundreds of acres of forest if not contained quickly.



KDF Photo Credit – Robert Bean
Aerial photo of Knoxes Creek Fire in Hart County

Within minutes of detecting the fire, firefighters were on the scene to fight the blaze. KDF's Hart County forest ranger technician, Lonnie Gibson, began cutting a fire line with the division's bulldozer while local fire departments assisted with water. KDF's quick response and familiarity with the terrain – along with assistance from three volunteer fire departments including Linwood, Hardyville and

Magnolia – ultimately prevented the fire from burning additional acreage. Although the fire had the potential to spread through hundreds of acres of forestland and destroy many years of hard work, there were only six acres burned.

Wildland firefighters understand the necessity of responding to incidents as quickly and safely as possible. Aerial detection is one of the best tools for KDF firefighters in finding and evaluating wildfires as they occur. As evidenced by the Knoxes Creek Fire, rapid detection and response can mean all the difference in terms of firefighter safety and protecting Kentucky's forests.

Contact Page

Department for Natural Resources.....502-564-6940
<http://dnr.ky.gov>

Contact our Divisions:

Conservation.....502-573-3080
<http://conservation.ky.gov>

Forestry.....502-564-4496
<http://forestry.ky.gov>

Oil and Gas502-573-0147
<http://oilandgas.ky.gov>

Office of Mine Safety and Licensing.....502-573-0140
<http://omsl.ky.gov>

Abandoned Mine Lands.....502-564-2141
<http://aml.ky.gov>

Mine Permits.....502-564-2320
<http://minepermits.ky.gov>

Mine Reclamation and Enforcement.....502-564-2340
<http://dmre.ky.gov>

Technical and Administrative Support.....502-564-6940
<http://dnr.ky.gov/techadminsupport>

Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund.....502-573-3080
<http://heritageland.ky.gov>

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Evan Satterwhite.....502-564-6940
Evan.Satterwhite@ky.gov

Linda Potter.....502-564-6940
Linda.Potter@ky.gov

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