

**Abstract for Submittal to the National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Programs
(NAAML) Conference**

EXTINGUISHMENT OF A COAL REFUSE BANK FIRE IN NORTHEAST PENNSYLVANIA

John J. Curley, P.E., Chief – Design Section (jcurley@pa.gov)
David Jansson, Project Designer (djansson@pa.gov)
Bernard Walko, P.E., Chief – Development Section (bwalko@pa.gov)
Riyad Barkawi, Project Developer (rbarkawi@pa.gov)

Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation
Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
2 Public Square, 5th Floor
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701-1915
570.826.2371

In December of 2013, the Wilkes-Barre Office of the Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation (BAMR) was notified of a coal refuse bank fire on abandoned mine lands 20 miles north of Scranton, PA. Upon investigation the fire presented a surface expression of about one quarter acre on the top of a large pile of coal refuse. The BAMR determined that extinguishment of this fire quickly was imperative.

BAMR development staff worked hard to obtain an Authorization to Proceed from the Office of Surface Mining and receive all the necessary clearances from other resource agencies. The design staff put together a design in a short time frame so that the fire could be undertaken quickly. In mid-January, the project was bid and construction started.

The battle to extinguish the fire occurred during the heart of one of the coldest winters to hit this region. Once the refuse pile was excavated it became apparent the small fire was much larger than anyone anticipated. This led to additional environmental clearances, work items and concerns from the public. After four months of almost constant work the fire was finally extinguished.

The technical paper regarding this project to extinguish the coal refuse bank fire will detail the process that the BAMR undertook to quickly develop, design and construct this project. It will explain what went right along with some of our missteps. This project was a definite learning experience for all of us and sharing this with others will be helpful to those whose work involves abandoned mines.