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Ohio EPA CLOSER Program Selected as Solid Waste Innovator of the Year

Ohio EPA received the 2011 Kevin M. Bonzo Solid Waste Innovator of the Year award today from the Buckeye Chapter of the Solid Waste Association of North America for its Closed Landfills and Orphaned Site Evaluation and Rating (CLOSER) program.

Ohio EPA created the CLOSER program in 2008 to deal with abandoned dump sites and improperly closed landfills that have no funding mechanism to improve their condition. The sites found throughout Ohio need continued monitoring and care. The program uses funds from the financial assurance trust account and penalty monies to accomplish site remediation work ranging from minor repairs to large landfill caps coupled with a methane gas management system.

Recent site remediation activities include:

- the removal and disposal of more than 7,000 tons of solid waste from an open dump created in the 1990s (Kern's Dump, Scioto County);
- erosion controls at an abandoned privately owned municipal waste landfill (Scioto Sanitation Landfill, Scioto County);
- modification of the gas extraction system at Mercomp (Schaff Road) Landfill in Cuyahoga County;
- erosion repairs at Old River Valley PNF in Butler County; and
- landfill cap and leachate management at two abandoned construction and demolition debris landfills in former coal strip-mined areas (A&L Salvage Inc. Landfill, Columbiana County, and Exit C&D Landfill, Stark County).

The federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) of 1976 established closure and monitoring requirements for public and private landfills. Facilities closed prior to 1976, along with more recent orphaned facilities with ongoing environmental releases, often continue to pose hazards. Many responsible parties have left inadequate funds for proper closure and post-closure care.

Criteria for entering the program are:

- facilities no longer accept waste;
- all enforcement actions are complete;
- no company or personal assets remain to fund closure/post-closure activities;
- significant problems such as gas migration and leachate outbreaks exist at the site; and
- there is an identified impact to public health, public safety or environment.

The program identifies potential sites, uses a scoring system to prioritize need, prepares a work statement for selected projects and makes recommendations based on available funding and inspected field activities.

Ohio EPA also has the option to provide grants to local health departments to complete landfill remediation tasks. The Agency secures all required property access agreements and the contractor is responsible for providing labor, materials, utilities, equipment, permits and other required services. In addition to this honor, in 2010, the CLOSER program received an innovative state program award from the National Registry of Environmental Professionals.

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