



Former Coal Mine Reclamation in Kansas

Fountainhead Engineering LTD (FHE) was retained by a Midwest development consortium that included WATCO (a transportation company with over twenty railroads, operating in eighteen states in North America) to develop a reclamation plan for an initial 150 acre parcel of abandoned mine land in Cherokee County, Kansas. Previous mining and coal preparation practices left this site (and adjacent surrounding areas) with undulating topography and long areas of ridges and cuts due to coal extraction (i.e. mining). The project area also had numerous spoil piles and constructed retention and slurry ponds as well as remnants of the former coal processing plant that ceased operation decades earlier.

The objective of the Former Mine 19 Reclamation Project (submitted on behalf of WATCO) was to re-grade the area, re-establish drainage patterns and improve water quality at this site while creating an improved habitat for wildlife and provide an area for passive recreational use. The proposed mine reclamation project would be a “no-cost” remedial action that actually would generate revenue to agencies of the state of Kansas. As part of this plan it was proposed that a royalty fee would be paid to Kansas Parks and Wildlife by operating an interim coal “fines” recovery system and segregating fine sized residual coal from earthen material. The coal fines recovered were to be sold and the recovered earthen materials were to be used for creating the new landscape. After reclamation and establishing a 24” rooting layer the project would be seeded with native grasses. The land was under the ownership of the Kansas Fish and Game Commission.

The plan developed required detailed field and analytical evaluations including performance of numerous hydrologic, geotechnical and environmental investigations, water quality sampling and characterizations of old slurry cells and mine cuts. A set of engineered drawings were developed illustrating existing conditions, proposed reclamation phases, process and materials flows during coal recovery and General Arrangement drawings (for proposed interim coal recovery operations) as well as final proposed contours and physical features. Discharges would have eventually entered into nearby Deer Creek.