

Texas Westmoreland Coal Company

TEEA 2013 Winner: Innovative Operations/Management



"It's not just about getting the coal out of the ground" says Denny Kingsley, president and general manager of Texas Westmoreland Coal Company in Jewett, Texas. Driving down FM39 southeast of Waco, the first thing you might notice in the distance are the massive drag lines and displaced earth indicative of surface coal mining operations; just as quickly though, it becomes apparent that much of the landscape exhibits a simple beauty of open rolling terrain with pockets of surface waters, free grazing land, and glimpses of wildlife. Inspired, a team of civil engineers, wildlife biologists, landscape architects, and executive management has diligently worked to integrate this beauty into everyday operations.

Restoration projects begin by working with specialized software and generating digital terrain models for the reclamation area, digitally reshaping the landscape to most closely resemble the original topography. The models are uploaded to reclamation and regrading equipment and work in conjunction with newly integrated GPS technology on the fleet of bulldozers. Because of these technologies, there is a greater efficiency in placement of suitable plant growth material or topsoil, generating a significant time savings and cost reduction in SPGM work by up to 30 percent.

Once the land has been regraded, a significant percentage of the projects then use native plant species and natural earthen materials to create elegant watersheds and reduce erosion during and after revegetation. Texas Westmoreland employees commonly apply hydromulch to help native seed establish more successfully on graded areas and plant species that are most adapted to their location along the river bank. Some projects that began under the previous owner have even been reworked to more closely mirror current expectations. Under these new standards, ongoing and modified older projects are dramatically changing the land from linear concrete-reinforced channels to a natural sinuous landscape.

Company officials set their ultimate goal to include reclamation at Jewett Mine as a key component of coal production so that the land will be returned to the property owner in its most natural state. By working with landowners to demonstrate the importance of native species—both vegetative and wildlife—and by dedicating operations to achieve that goal, the Texas Westmoreland Coal Company is establishing itself as an industry leader in innovative conservation.