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NEWS

Growing together

Noah Chandler

Eagle Reporter

Friday, Feb 27, 2009

More than 30 students from Oakman High School joined members of the Alabama Forestry Commission and the Department of Industrial Relations Mining and Reclamation Division Thursday at the Nicholas Mine to take part in this year's Arbor Day celebration.

Oakman High students learned about reclamation of land, a process to replenish the land to close to its original form, as well as learning about the American Chestnut.

David W. Morris of the American Chestnut Foundation taught the students about the history of the tree. He told them about the decline of the trees and the hopeful resurrection of the species.

Reed Minerals Inc. president Bob Reed Jr. said the reclamation process is something that helps not only the environment but is beneficial to the land owners.

"After mining is completed we begin the process of reclaiming the land," Reed said. "Typically the land owner will let us know what they want done with the land when we first start mining."

Reed said the reclaimed land usually is more accessible and more easily navigated.

"Once finished, the land takes on a more gradual slope compared to the hillsides we start with," Reed said. "If you can tell Walker County has a lot of hills and valleys. Landowners can ask us to do anything from grading the land to planting trees and replenishing our holding ponds with fish. We like to think it is beneficial to everyone and everything involved."

Since 2005 Reed Minerals has harvested over 400,000 tons of coal at the Nicholas mine.

Oakman High Agricultural Science teacher Chris Thrasher said it is important for students to understand why the reclamation process is so important.

"It is important for our students to know it is the responsibility of the mine to reclaim the land and return it back to a suitable environment," Thrasher said. "It is also important for the students to understand the efforts the mining community makes in order to reclaim the land after the natural resources have been removed. I really appreciate the Alabama Mining Commission and Reed Minerals for allowing us to experience this first hand."

Among the students attending the Arbor Day event were 10th graders Bart Clement and Hunter Wade. Both agreed reclaiming land is an important aspect of mining.

"I think this is great," Clement said smiling. "It helps the environment as well as the surrounding communities. Plus this give animals



Thomas Trotter of the Surface Mining Commission, left, stands with Reed Minerals Inc. President Bob Reed Jr., right, overlooking the Nicholas Mine reclamation project Thursday during the Arbor Day celebration. Trotter worked as the inspector for this site. Photo By: Noah Chandler

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Wade echoed his fellow Future Farmer of America member when he said reclaiming was a very smart idea.

He said he believes the ecosystem will be much stronger following the reclamation.

Alabama Surface Mining Commission Director Randy Johnson said the Arbor Day celebration is beneficial to the students of Oakman, as well as the surrounding communities.

“This event will help promote Arbor Day and educate our children,” Johnson said. “Tree planting is not prevalent on coal mines. The trees they (students) are planting today are pines and oaks.”

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