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RMEF, Partners Honored with National Reclamation Award

MISSOULA, MT –The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and its partner organizations received national recognition for restoring land impacted by past coal mining operations and previously uninhabitable to wildlife. The groups received the U.S. Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement's 2012 National Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Award for the Dents Run Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Project in Benezette Township, Elk County, Pennsylvania.

“RMEF worked for decades to conserve and enhance wildlife habitat in Pennsylvania,” said David Allen, RMEF president and CEO. “This project is an example of our long-term commitment to ensure quality habitat exists for elk and other wildlife in the Keystone State. We intend to build on this relationship and success for years to come.”

The Pennsylvania Game Commission, with help from RMEF and other partners, purchased a 1,359-acre tract known as State Game Land #311 near the town of Benezette in 1990. Covered by a thick deciduous hardwood forest, it was also dotted with abandoned strip mine sites. Using innovative technologies, the DEP and its partners began the Dents Run Restoration Project in 2002 and wrapped up work in March 2012. They remediated dangerously steep highwalls, water impoundments, mine openings and hundreds of acres of barren, unstable, acidic mine spoil to create more than 320 acres of additional habitat for Pennsylvania's growing elk herd and restore a stream to support a healthy wild trout population.

"This award recognizes the innovative approach DEP, our partners in industry, local grass roots groups and sister government agencies used to restore water quality in Dents Run and create habitat for the state's elk herd," said DEP Deputy Secretary for Active and Abandoned Mining John Stefanko. "This effort restored a native trout stream and enhanced the rangeland for Pennsylvania's growing elk herd in one of the state's most scenic areas."

RMEF funding for the project totaled more than \$115,000 which came via membership drives and banquet fundraising by Pennsylvania chapters. To date, RMEF and its partners completed 281 conservation and hunting heritage outreach projects in Pennsylvania, protecting or enhancing 14,772 acres of habitat with a combined value of nearly \$22 million. Allen thanked RMEF supporters for their dedication to conservation both in Pennsylvania and all across elk country.

About the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation:

RMEF is leading a conservation initiative that protected or enhanced habitat on more than 6 million acres—an area larger than Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, Glacier, Yosemite, Rocky Mountain and Great Smoky Mountains national parks combined. RMEF also is a strong voice for hunters in access, wildlife management and conservation policy issues. RMEF members, partners and volunteers, working together as Team Elk, are making a difference all across elk country. Join us at www.rmef.org or 800-CALL ELK.

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