

Non-Traditional Reclamation of Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) to Support Economic Revitalization and Community Development – Implementation of the 2017 AML Pilot Program in Pennsylvania¹

Eric E. Cavazza²

Abstract: The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2017, (Public Law 115-31), authorized the federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) to provide funding for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 for the Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Economic Development Pilot Program (AML Pilot Program). The FY2017 AML Pilot Program provided grants to the six Appalachian states with the highest amount of unfunded high-priority coal AML problems based on OSMRE's AML inventory data as of September 30, 2016. Kentucky, Pennsylvania (PA), and West Virginia each received \$25 million, while Alabama, Ohio, and Virginia each received \$10 million. The purpose of the funding is to accelerate the remediation of AML sites with economic and community development end uses. The intent of the AML Pilot Program is to explore and implement strategies to return legacy coal sites to productive uses. PA also received \$30 million in AML Pilot Program funding in FY 2016 and \$25 million in FY2018. State AML programs are required to develop a list of eligible projects in Appalachian counties that demonstrate a nexus with AML or Abandoned Mine Drainage (AMD) cleanup and economic revitalization and community development. From over two dozen AML Pilot project proposals received and evaluated, PA selected 13 projects including: four surface mine reclamation projects; two acid mine drainage treatment projects; six coal refuse pile removal or remediation projects, and one project to remediate a potential subsidence prone area on a college campus. In addition to eliminating a number high-priority AML/AMD features, benefits of the projects include: development of a youth sports complex; creation or expansion of several industrial and/or business parks; a new housing development; protection of college campus buildings from mine subsidence issues; reforestation and restoration of public lands; improved groundwater quality; stream water quality improvement including restored fisheries; increased tourism through public trail development; and removal of refuse material from a floodplain to prevent stream flooding and to develop a community park. This presentation will highlight the planned and ongoing reclamation as well as the anticipated benefits for each of the 13 AML Pilot Projects along with the status of each.

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 2. Eric E. Cavazza, P.E., Director, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation, Harrisburg, PA 17106.