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## **EPCAMR Leads PA Fish & Boat Director on Tour of Two of the largest Mine Drainage Sites in the NE**

**(June 6, 2008)**— As part of a week-long trip for National Fishing and Boating Week, PA Fish & Boat Commission (PA F&BC) Executive Director Doug Austen and Director of Policy Tim Schaeffer met with staff of the Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation and the Office of Surface Mining/VISTA Team's Watershed Development Coordinator, Carly Trumann, to visit the two most voluminous mine drainage discharge sites in NE Pennsylvania. EPCAMR Regional Coordinator, Robert E. Hughes worked with the PA F&BC to organize and schedule the watershed tour to give Director Austen not only an opportunity to see some of the more devastating impacts that mine drainage is having on the Susquehanna River and its tributaries, but to discuss some of the future possibilities for resource recovery of the metals and potential reuse of the treated water for economic development. The tour began at the Jeddo Tunnel, outside of Hazleton, which, with a daily flow of 40 million gallons, is the second largest AMD discharge in the state. This discharge flows just south of the Drums Elementary School and continues on down through the Conyngham Valley and drains to the Nescopeck Creek and eventually to the Susquehanna River polluted by iron, manganese, aluminum, and coal silt flushes during heavy rain events.

Mike Hewitt, Outreach Coordinator for EPCAMR, explained the unconventional treatment methods that must be developed to treat a drainage site of the Jeddo's magnitude and provided an estimate of costs and design based on a Federal mine drainage treatment system program known as AMDTreat. EPCAMR informed Director Austen that another partner organization, the Eastern Middle Anthracite Region Recovery, Inc., an innovative technical assistance non-profit out of the Hazleton Area, has taken the lead on applying for several grant opportunities through the State PA Department of Environmental Protection to assess the feasibility of treating the discharge and somehow reusing the treated mine drainage as a resource.

The Friends of the Nescopeck Creek are another local partner in the watershed that has been working with the Coalition to seek and secure additional funds to remediate the water quality impacts to the Nescopeck Creek. EPCAMR informed Director Austen that for the last several years we have been testing the water with a local elementary school contingent of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students from the 3 area schools, located within the Conyngham Valley and have provided them with GIS Mapping tools to help them to understand their local watershed.

The tour proceeded to the Old Forge Bore Hole on the Lackawanna River, which has the highest flow volume than any other mine drainage discharge site in the State, reaching 50 million gallons per day, depositing mainly iron hydroxide onto the stream bottom of the entire Lackawanna River, south of the mine drainage discharge location along Railroad Street, to its confluence with the Susquehanna River. Chris Gillis, founder of EcoTech LLC, has been working for over a decade to design an innovative resource recovery and water treatment system tailor-fit to the Old Forge site, and he was present to explain his plans and ideas to Director Austin and Mr. Schaeffer.

EPCAMR has been an integral partner with EcoTech LLC, from the beginning, and other partners from the area, including the Luzerne and Lackawanna County Commissioners, Lackawanna River Corridor Association, Lackawanna and Luzerne County Conservation Districts, Susquehanna River Basin Commission, as well as Duryea and Old Forge Boroughs, are all well-informed of the project. Mr. Austin expressed enthusiasm for EPCAMR's AMD treatment work, and he and Mr. Schaeffer indicated that PFBC would be interested in supporting many of the projects through the creation of access points to treated sections of the rivers and streams that are being worked on in the NE Region, as well as letters of support for Mr. Gillis's project.



**Jeddo Mine Tunnel**



**Old Forge Borehole Mine Drainage**



**Mike Hewitt-EPCAMR, Director Doug Austen-PA F& BC, Chris Gillis-Eco Tech, LLC, and Tim Schaeffer-PA F& BC at Old Forge**