



Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation

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February 2022 Progress Report

Project Coordination

Swoyersville Harry E. Reclamation and Community Athletic Area AMLER Project

- Completed the December 2021 Reimbursement for submission along with the Summary Narrative Report to *Gerard Schmidt*, Project Officer for PA DEP BAMR

Healing the Scars: Reclaiming Northeastern PA! with ISI

- Provided *Claudia Meglin*, ISI with some statistics on the number of people reached Directly- **438** people and volunteers and Indirectly- The number of people who saw any content from our social media Facebook Page that we used for outreach, including posts, stories, social information from people who interact with our Page for the year was **147,976**. (**8,500** people and families were reached for the STEAM Camp alone as a part of that total indirect number; **3,739** people were reached alone, with our one post on the filming with our trout puppets); When our posts are shared by individuals or organizations that support us and follow us on social media, it increases our reach; Overall, this was a 102.6% increase over our outreach from 2020 in 2021; Once the Trout Puppet video is released, we hope to get additional viewership and outreach from youth and people who follow our social media who will learn about how we restore our mining impacted watersheds and try and restore our fisheries; Submitted the catering invoice to Centone Productions for reimbursement; Reviewed graphic designs, and video edits for inserts, comments, additions, and corrections, into the soon to be released 12-minute "*Brookie Braves a Storm*" AMD Educational video provided by *Claudia*

Bear Creek AMD Treatment Survey, Design, O & M Plan and Permitting Package Project

- Finalized the subcontract agreement language with SRBC to complete several deliverables on the project and worked with *Mike* to get a signature from our EPCAMR President, Dr. *Joseph Simons III* to send along to the SRBC for their signature at a March 2022 Commissioner's Meeting

Mine Subsidence Mine Mapping Project

- Coordinated with the EPCAMR Staff on monthly work progress on scanning, digitizing, georeferencing, cataloguing, and mosaicking of mine maps for January 2022

Mill Creek Coldwater Conservation Plan Assessment Project

- Received the Final Mill Creek Electroshocking Fish Survey completed by *Kathleen Lavelle*, TU and *Allison Lutz*, TU from *Amy Wolfe*-TU to include with the Final submission of the Mill Creek Coldwater Conservation Plan that will be submitted to the CHP Program at PA TU in a few weeks; Scheduled and held the Final Draft Plan Zoom Informational Meeting on February 8th, 2022- 6-8PM on the Mill Creek Coldwater Heritage Conservation Plan, Luzerne County and invited all of our stakeholders and partners in the watershed (; Provided *John Levitsky*, Luzerne Conservation District Watershed Specialist with a copy of the Fish Survey from TU to allow him to take a look at the flow data from the hydrograph on a USGS Gauge Station on the Susquehanna River; Made final comments to the final plan and final edits to the document before submission to PA TU; The [Story Map](#) of the **43** Recommendations that EPCAMR are in the Final Plan; *Mike* optimized the documents before sending them along to PA TU due to their size and high quality photos embedded in the documents and appendices

Luzerne/Lackawanna County Action Plan with Larson Design Group

- *Ted Evgeniadis*, Lower Susquehanna RiverKeeper, provided EPCAMR with a [link](#) on the dredging project that Conowingo Systems (North Gate Dutra & Restoration Systems created a collaborative entity in charge of testing) and it contains sediment characterization report; EPCAMR is interested in finding out if the sediment makes any note of coal silts or other metal oxides that might be also building up behind the dam that would help us make a determination that the sediments being trapped are all co-mingled and at which point should we be calling AMD, a contributing sediment instead of separating it into a stand alone metal loading with a lower priority for the Chesapeake Bay watershed; Conowingo Systems and the Lower Susquehanna RiverKeeper want to explore more potential beneficial reuse options for the sediment and one that hasn't been explored much was for abandoned mine land reclamation; *Jeff Corbin* who is the Senior Vice-President for Water Quality Markets & Mitigation for Restorations Systems may have an interest in talking further; Additional research documentation was found authored by SRBC, USGS, and URS related to legacy sediments and AMD

Keep PA Beautiful Ani-Littering Curriculum Update Project

- Discussed with *Laura Rinehimer* and *Denise Hernandez*-EPCAMR Staff about taking a closer look at responding to the Keep PA Beautiful RFP to update their state-wide illegal dumping and anti-littering curriculum and transcribing a few of the lessons into Spanish; Staff worked on submitting a proposal to perform the work; Provided Laura with a brief bio for inclusion in the RFP

Just Transition Fund Cycle 2 Planning Grant for Capacity Building Expansion of EPCAMR GIS Solar Site Selection Tool

- *Nikko Simons*, EPCAMR volunteer worked to create a Google Document database of solar developers, non-profit organizations, consultants, stakeholders, and landowners in order for EPCAMR to track new partnerships as we continue to advocate for solar on abandoned mine lands throughout PA; Forwarded a number of contacts and details of existing stakeholders in the solar realm to *Nikko* to enter into the new database and provided him and the EPCAMR Staff with the outline for the grant and discussed our path forward over the next year through December 2022 while we are working on the project;

- *Guy Sheets*, [BSTI](#) spoke with *Alex Rivera*, Sales Manager for Vanguard Energy, a large solar developer who work with Independent Power Producers like Nextera to build larger solar arrays; They are looking into PA to determine if they can provide a cost advantage based on the current rate structure and were interested in EPCAMR's work on abandoned mine lands to promote solar development at the community and utility scale; *Ed Wytovich*-EPCAMR Board member forwarded a concerning [article](#) from Inside Climate News, related to pauses on new solar projects that will request approval through the PJM that will impact future solar development projects on abandoned mine lands; PJM Backlog [article](#) and PJM Queue Reform [article](#); Conference call convened with *John Choma*- [Enerlogics](#) from western PA and asked him to help us reach out to groups and landowners in the Bituminous region who might be interested in solar development on abandoned mine lands;
- Requested that *Nikko Simons* add *Vince Guarana*, Fox Coal Company, Northumberland County to the list as a potential landowner with a site that might be suitable for solar on both land and on water called "Commissioner's Lake"; EPCAMR has been in conversations with him and providing him technical assistance and contacts about potential funding opportunities through the State; *Tina Carr*, reached out about connecting with [SEEDS](#), a clean energy Co-op she is a volunteer with in the Honesdale area that EPCAMR is familiar with; The Co-op is the financing arm of the non-profit and is charged with getting solar installed on non-profit organizations with aligned conservation and clean energy missions; SEEDS works primarily in Pike and Wayne counties, but is now looking to support projects in Luzerne and Lackawanna counties; *Kathy Cook*-PA League of Conservation Voters asked if EPCAMR was aware of any efforts to put farmers together with landowners to consider an agri-voltaics industry where ground-cover crops for animal grazing or pollinator plant species would be considered on the sites, however, EPCAMR was not aware of any
- Directed *Frank Sindaco*, EPCAMR GIS Watershed Outreach Specialist to search for non-profit community groups working in the solar realm that EPCAMR could connect with and include in our new network and database and send to them the [EPCAMR](#) and [PA Environmental Digest articles](#) that highlight our intent to seek out new partners to take a much closer look at solar on abandoned mine land sites and in legacy mining impacted watersheds
- *Mike Shimko*, teacher at Wilkes-Barre Area School District is interested in seeking funds for a demonstration project on the school grounds for a small-scale solar array and requested help and ideas from EPCAMR for contacts; EPCAMR is going to try and connect him with *Tina Carr*, SEEDS
- *Shannon Baudoin-Rea*, Administrator for PennEnvironment, shared Research & Policy Center's newest report Solar on Superstores; This new report found that putting solar panels on the rooftops of big box and grocery stores like Walmart and Target offers an incredible opportunity for solar energy growth in PA; Solar on Superstores showed that Pennsylvania ranks 9th in the nation for potential solar power generation from big-box stores' rooftops; She provided EPCAMR with the [full report](#) and [press release](#) to share on our social media
- Introduced EPCAMR's work to *Ryan Stoa*, President, PA Extruded Tube Company (PEXCO), Clarks Summit; Provided him with an overview of our recent efforts to advocate for solar on abandoned mine lands throughout the State
- Zoom call with *Doug Bush*, [IMG Energy Solutions](#) to discuss solar on abandoned mine lands

- *Chelsea Barnes*, AppVoices introduced EPCAMR to *Elena Weissman*, Mid-Atlantic Regional Director for [Vote Solar](#), who was interested to know of EPCAMR's involvement in advocating for and building a broader network of supporters and landowners interested in considering solar development on abandoned mine lands; Participated in an introductory phone call with *Elena*
- *Forest Cohn*, President of [Utopian Power](#), reached out to EPCAMR and wanted to learn more about our efforts to reach into the solar arena on abandoned mine lands; EPCAMR to follow up
- Informed *Heidi Binko* and *Rachel Young* from The Just Transition Fund about EPCAMR's invite to be a part of a panel presentation to discuss solar on abandoned lands at the [8th Annual Renewable Energy Summit](#), Camp Hill, PA on March 14-15th
- *Kace Coble*-Director of Marketing and Communications from [SGC Power](#) has an interest in following up with EPCAMR on a follow up article to the one written by Kathy Cook-PA League of Women Voters on the solar on abandoned mine lands topic

NFWF Southern Wyoming Valley Watershed Assessment of American Black Duck Habitat and Trout Stream Habitat for Aquatic Passage

- *Blake Gardiner*, NFWF Program Manager informed EPCAMR that *Brit Abrams* had left NFWF for another job and that he would be the new contact person for our project; Submitted a reimbursement request through December 2021; Provided him with a brief update on the project and informed him that EPCAMR would send down a summary update report to catch him up since he has just taken on a number of new projects; Discussed our work last Summer and Fall 2021 and an update on our reimbursement submission and plan to submit an additional reimbursement for travel time and supplies that were purchased under the grant; He informed EPCAMR that we can apply for a 90-day extension, which is typical since we had received our agreement so late in the year last year due to the pandemic; Provided *John Levitsky*, Luzerne Conservation District Watershed Specialist with a copy of our nearly final draft QAPP that we will be submitting to NFWF for approval once he takes a look at it to see if we have anything missing; Steve Cornia-EPCAMR GIS Watershed Outreach Specialist, provided information on the HOBO Temperature sensors that we will include; Forwarded a link to a few webinar dates that NFWF was having on creating QAPPs for projects to *Mike*, although we are nearly finished with our Plan; Forwarded a link and a [video](#) link to a [USGS Report](#) referred to EPCAMR by our colleague *John Clune*, entitled, Nitrogen in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed-A Century of Change, 1950-2050, Circular 1486, National Water Quality Program

Technical Assistance

- Reviewed a draft letter of extension for *George Lehman*, President of the Huber Breaker Preservation Society on the Huber Miners Memorial Park Reclamation in Ashley Borough, PA that will be submitted to PA DCED
- EPCAMR Staff participated in a Zoom call with the Luzerne Conservation District and Earth Conservancy to talk about the potential for a larger plan to be put forth to look at watershed restoration in the Nanticoke Creek watershed related to infrastructure, bridges, culverts, stream restoration, and AMD; Provided comments on *John's* draft minutes from call to add details and clarifications an additional input for consideration

Datashed Technical Assistance

- Zoom call with *Cliff Denholm*, SRI to determine how EPCAMR can assist with data entry, reviewing existing information in the database, and changes to the platform; EPCAMR has posted the Datashed Workshops from the 2021 PA AMR Conference to the website

Just Transition Federal Funds Access (proposed)

- EPCAMR is looking to prepare a **\$25,000** grant to help with expenses necessary for local to submit strong federal applications for community-led transition projects that advance equitable and inclusive local economies in the coalfields of our region; The expenses can include grant-writing expertise, research, analysis, organizing or deepening inclusive community partnerships, conducting stakeholder engagement and supporting community planning, and for use as private matching funds for some of the Federal grant programs that are a part of the Interagency Working Groups that have funding for Infrastructure projects including economic development on abandoned mine lands, reclamation, and AMD

AC Power Outreach to Landowners on Solar on AML

- Communicated with *Briana McDuff*, AC Power and participated in a conference call to discuss some further outreach to a few more landowners in the Anthracite region and informed her of our recent grant from The Just Transition Fund; Zoom call with *Kyle Miller*, Senior Project Director, and *Tina Carr* from AC Power to determine if there were any immediate solar interests from initial landowners that have been coming forward

Community Volunteer Coordination

- Signed *Nikko Simons*, EPCAMR Volunteer, Wyoming, PA up for the NAACC Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP) online culvert assessment training
- Connected *Emma Steely*, Penn-State University Environmental Resource Management student with partners in the Catawissa Creek watershed, Schuylkill Conservation District, and the Columbia County Conservation District, since she was interested in volunteering when she returns home for the Summer 2022 to the Catawissa area
- Followed up with *Jacob Smith*, National Fish Coalition, who is interested in becoming an EPCAMR Volunteer and helping to recruit additional volunteers who want to become certified in the NAACC Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP) online culvert assessment training

Education & Outreach

- EPCAMR reviewed a IJA Implementation Recommendations document produced by National RECLAIM Act partners on suggestions on how the funds directed to abandoned mine land reclamation projects across the country should be prioritized for spending; Offered to have reporters follow up with EPCAMR on educational information and discussion around the recommendations; An IJA [Explainer](#) Blog on AML was completed by a colleague, Eric Dixon from the Ohio River Valley Institute to break down the bill and the funding

- Updated the EPCAMR Staff on the delay in shipment of the rainbow trout eggs to the Office for our continued participation in the Trout in the Classroom Program; They were eventually shipped on February 8th to the Office
- Passed along the [Chesapeake B-WET Grant](#) opportunity to *Laura* provided by *Leigh Ann Henry*-EPCAMR Board member
- Reviewed [HB 2020](#) that was introduced that establishes the framework for a Growing Greener III program and [SB 525](#); It has been referred to the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee; These are bills that EPCAMR would surely support
- *Ad Crable*-Staff Writer for the Chesapeake Bay Journal, authored a great [article](#) on AMD and the recent funding announcements for abandoned mine land reclamation projects in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and throughout the country
- Friends of the Nescopeck Creek Watershed Association provided EPCAMR with a copy of the Water Quality Report for 2021 of their sampling chemical sampling and flow monitoring data throughout the watershed
- Authored an article for the [PA Forestry Association](#) Spring 2022 Magazine highlighting EPCAMR's work to plant apple trees and milkweed plants in Centralia in April of 2021 at the request of *Brenda Lee Sieglitz*,-Senior Manager for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation/[10 Million Trees Partnership](#)
- News [release](#) was announced by the US Department of the Interior on the Investment in Infrastructure and Jobs Act on the **\$11.3** Billion being directed towards abandoned mine land reclamation across the country
- Sent a thank you note to *Meghan Pierce*, Executive Director, with the [PA League of Women Voters](#) to inform her of the great articles that were written by *Kathy Cook* on the topic of solar on abandoned mine lands following her interviews with me on several occasions
- *Keith O'Brien*, a journalist and New York Times best-selling [author](#) who has had work published in Politico, the Washington Post and on National Public Radio, reached out to talk about EPCAMR's previous work in Centralia and interviewed EPCAMR on the apple tree planting and the milkweed plantings to encourage the migration of monarch butterflies through the area for a feature story on NPR; Provided him with *Laura Rinehimer's* contact information for additional follow up, who coordinated the apple tree planting efforts
- Edited *Kathy Cook's*-PA League of Women Voters Letter to the Editor that she will promote to newspaper outlets across PA that highlights EPCAMR's call for interested landowners who want to reclaim their abandoned mine lands or determine if they are eligible as abandoned mine lands for a variety of funding sources or economic development and renewable energy type projects
- EPCAMR was able to find a [US DOE Solar Power in Your Community Guide for Local Governments](#) was shared to the entire Staff for their review as we continue to look for abandoned mine land areas for consideration in our coalfield communities

- PA American Water has its 2022 Protect Our Watersheds Art Contest open in their 20th year of celebration and asked EPCAMR for helping in spreading the word through our social media; The contest is for fourth-, fifth- and sixth-grade students in schools served by Pennsylvania American Water, as well as individual students who live in the company's service area. The top three finalists in both East and West PA will receive gift cards and the top 12 will be featured in our 2023 calendar; The application is available at their [website](#)
- EPCAMR provided comments to the US EPA, Council on Environmental Quality, and the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council on the recent launch of the [Climate and Justice Screening Tool](#) beta screening tool to help identify disadvantaged polluted communities due to the lack of inclusion of areas impacted by abandoned mines and legacy mine water pollution; The tool is supposed to help to prioritize the Justice 40 Initiative where funds are being targeted for specific environmental justice communities across the country; [Article](#) on Screening Tool
- The courts accepted the "Carter Plan" for the redistricting Congressional Map in PA; The statistics that can be pulled up and demographics from the previous election are robust and detailed; [Fair Districts PA](#); Provided the link to the PA AML Campaign partners so they knew what legislators would be in the newly drawn districts in the coming elections
- Participated in the monthly National RECLAIM Working Group Conference call and weekly PA AML Campaign Conference calls to listen to updates on AML, bills, and the Infrastructure package as it relates to AML and AMD
- Participated in a call with the PA DEP Office of Environmental Justice (PA DEP OEJ) Staff to update them on EPCAMR's submission of information to the US EPA and the screening tools being beta tested regarding the need to include AMD and AML thresholds and criteria as well; EJ Screen could also benefit from including the information as well so the comments were provided to the PA DEP OEJ
- Participated in a Common Agenda Environmental Justice Core Committee Zoom Meeting to bring AML/AMD issues to the groups seeking input on PA issues
- Participated in the monthly Choose Clean Water Coalition Meeting to give updates on EPCAMR projects in the Chesapeake Bay watershed
- Conference call with *Joe Greco*, President, BEG Group, LLC who was interested in learning more about EPCAMR and becoming a member

Conferences, Training, Webinars, Tours, Exhibits, & Workshops

- Followed up with *Tammy Shannon*, PSU ERM Program on the planned April 9th AMD/AML Tour in the Wyoming Valley with students from the ERM Program; Outlined the number and location of sites to visit and the timing necessary to accommodate stops to each of those locations; Provided Penn-State with GPS address locations of the anticipated stops that the bus will make during the tour
- Reviewed the final Intergenerational Panel [video](#) from the 2021 Schuylkill River Congress provided by *Chari Towne*, Schuylkill Riverkeeper

- Coordinated with *Elizabeth Hughes*, Earth Conservancy for the Environmental Workforce Training Program with her new cohort of 10 individuals on February 2nd when EPCAMR Staff trained them on reading and interpreting surface and underground mine maps, the use of GIS for brownfields and reclamation assessments, how EPCAMR performs watershed assessments and water quality monitoring, and set up a tour of reclamation and AMD sites through STA Transportation; Conducted the training and invoiced PSU Wilkes-Barre at the direction of Earth Conservancy
- Worked with the PA AMR Conference Planning Committee to determine the time slot to ask PA DCNR Secretary *Cindy Adams Dunn* if she would be able to speak during the conference in June before submitting the official request to her scheduler's office; Submitted request for a video presentation from US DOI Secretary *Deb Haaland*; *Shontha Ready Alonso*, Director, Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs (OIEA) confirmed receipt of the PA AMR Conference Committee's request; Participated in an PA AMR Conference Planning Committee meeting; Provided the State College Borough Covid Policy Ordinance to the full Committee for review and consideration; Reviewed *Mike's* updates and the Committee comments to the [website](#) for the PA AMR Conference; Informed the Committee that EPCAMR would bring the Executive Director's personal Canon - EOS Rebel T8i DSLR Camera with EF-S 18-55mm Lens, if it is needed for streaming of videos at the conference along with Anne Daymut's from WPCAMR; Worked on the revised Sponsorship Letter for the PA AMR Conference; Sent a survey out to past conference attendees to gauge their level of comfort to attending in-person or having a hybrid/virtual component this year in June; ~58/42 In-person compared to hybrid/virtual
- Scheduled an AMD Tie Dye Workshop and Educational Event with King's College, Wilkes-Barre, for Earth Day on April 20th from 12-3PM coordinating by *Kelly Gibson*
- Reached out to the EPCAMR Staff about attending the March 26th, 2022, Annual Banquet of the Stanley Cooper Chapter of Trout Unlimited, our major conservation partner in our Trout in the Classroom Program and support of our Coldwater Conservation Plans that we have developed over the years
- Attended a PennEnvironment Zoom Meeting to hear about "What 100% Renewable Energy Means for PA" and connected with *Flora Cardoni*, Field Director about our work on abandoned mine lands with solar, promoting geothermal, mine pool reuse, AMD rare earth elements recovery and monitoring, pump storage, and hydroelectric potential; PennEnvironment is interested in putting together a lunch and learn webinar on solar on abandoned mine lands in April 2022 with a few partners; PennEnvironment shared our two recent articles on the subject matter to their social media page
- Registered for the 8th Annual Renewables Summit and Advocacy Day Summit, Camp Hill, PA on March 14-15th as an invited Panel Speaker to talk about solar on abandoned mine lands and other renewable energy ideas for mine lands and mine water; The Summit was hosted by the [Renewables Work for PA](#) (RW4PA) coalition, the PA Solar & Storage Industries Association (PASSIA), and the Mid-Atlantic Renewables Energy Coalition (MAREC Action); Convened a Zoom call with the panelist to plan our order of speaking and to outline our topics for discussion
- Participated in a WebEx call with Senator *Bob Casey* and his Staff to be given a rundown on the PA IJA Fact Sheet, a slide deck review on IJA, and a Formula and Competitive Funding by Agency Community Guide in PDF format

- Provided *Tali MacArthur*, POWR, with a multi-year report of accomplishments from EPCAMR that she requested to highlight projects, funding, grants leveraged, and partnerships that we have had over the years
- Attended a NFWF CBSF Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) Webinar- For Projects Involving Field Sampling
- Registered to attend a PPL Luncheon at the Woodlands Inn on April 13th, 2022 to meet the PPL Electric Utilities President, *Steph Raymond*, upon receiving an invitation from *Alana Roberts*-Regional Affairs Director

EPCAMR Program Administration

- Reconciled EPCAMR's Checking Account and PA Invest Accounts; Paid Health Care Premiums for EPCAMR Staff for December 2021 and January 2022 with Highmark; Paid Verizon and Internet monthly bills; Paid EC the rent; Made deposits to FNB for incoming reimbursements, checks, and accounts receivables; Provided *Denise* with a copy of the January FNB Statement
- Completed the February 2022 Monthly Report for both the 319 Program and for the Board Reporting and forwarded it to *Mike*
- Ordered 3-Season jackets for all the EPCAMR Staff and they were delivered and distributed
- Provided *Mike* with two additional documents from the Communications and Science & Education Committees to include in the Final Draft of our EPCAMR 5 Year Strategic Plan Update to amend to the PDF document for the Board to review and provide any final comments before approval later this year
- The EPCAMR Executive Director was appointed by the PA DEP Secretary *Patrick McDonnell* to a 2-year term on the PA DEP Environmental Justice Advisory Board ([EJAB](#)); Participated in the first EJAB Microsoft Teams Meeting on the 17th of February in the morning prior to the EPCAMR Board Meeting
- Convened the 1st Quarter 2022 EPCAMR Board Zoom Meeting on February 17th virtually
- Participated in a Zoom Call with *Colleen Geasey*, Senior Fundraising Sales Consultant for Network for Good; She provided EPCAMR with some free online [resources](#)
- Received an update on EPCAMR's approval as a PayPal Giving Fund enrolled charity