

Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation



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February 2024 Progress Report EPCAMR Conservation District Mining East Project

Project Coordination

Swoyersville Harry E. AML Reclamation and Community Athletic Area AMLER Project

- Completed Progress Report for January 2024, Invoice 42, Invoice 43 and submitted to PA DEP BAMR along with documentation from Keystone Reclamation Fuels Management LLC for hauling and excavation of the waste culm; Signed an extension letter through October 31, 2024 for the project and submitted it to Riyadh Barkawi, PA DEP BAMR at his request; Received a fully executed signed copy back from Riyadh

Just Transition Fund Rare Earth Elements Capacity Building Project

- EPCAMR was in communication with our partners, Tetra Tech to see if they had heard anything on last year's submission of the Rare Earth Elements AMLER Grant for the Hollywood AMD Treatment Plan and the Tyler Abandoned Mine Land Culm Banks Reclamation from the Commonwealth of PA; It was suggested that we reach out to local Congressman's Office (Cartwright) and (Thompson) to see if there has been any progress on the review of the proposal by the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) Office in Washington DC yet, since the PA Governor's Office supported the project; Initially reached out to *Brad Moore* in Congressman *GT Thompson's* Office to inquire about the status of the proposal; *Andrea Verobish*, from Congressman *GT Thompson's* Office followed up and said that the grant is still in a review and vetting process with the OSMRE

Columbia University REE Sampling Research

- Conducted a round of field sampling with Columbia University Researcher and graduate students throughout the Wyoming Valley; They will be analyzing the data at their lab in New York to determine if there are any critical earth elements found in some of the AMD in the Wyoming Valley; The graduate students also have been able to identify a few different species of algae and sulfate-reducing bacteria

EPCAMR/WPCAMR/ARIPPA Mini-Grant Program

- EPCAMR was awarded a **\$2K** convening grant from the Foundation for PA Watershed to allocate towards the Mini-grant program, which includes a 10% Administrative allocation

Tetra Tech/ SCRA AMD Sampling

- Provided *Mike Hewitt*-Program Manager, with copies of the lab results of February 2024 sampling data sent to EPCAMR from the PA DEP Labs for the sampling of several discharges and upstream and downstream monitoring points in the Shamokin Creek watershed for Tetra Tech (TT) and Shamokin Creek Restoration Alliance (SCRA); Submitted Invoice to TT for November 2023 that was not received and January 2024; Sampled monitoring points around the watershed with the Northumberland County Conservation District watershed specialist, *Brenna Schnieder*; TT asked EPCAMR if we had ever compiled infiltration zones along the streams in the Shamokin Creek Watershed where they we're looking for areas that are suspected of losing flow to the underground mine workings; Mike provided copies of some of the older reports that reference flow loss points such as the [Scarlift Report for Shamokin Creek](#); [Water Budgets and Groundwater Volumes for Abandoned Underground Mines in the Western Middle Anthracite Coalfield](#)..which we co-authored with the USGS

Loyalsock Creek AMD Sampling and Tour for Sullivan County Conservation District

- Sampled several AMD treatment systems and upstream and downstream locations within the Loyalsock Creek watershed and hosted *Jolie Coates*, new Sullivan County Conservation District Watershed Specialist for the day to educate her on the types of systems and the locations of where they were to familiarize herself with each of them and the other partners in the watershed working to maintain the improved water quality of the Loyalsock Creek

EPCAMR/WPCAMR/SRI Survey of Community Watershed Organizations on AMD/AML

- Convened a call with *Cliff Denholm*, SRI, and *Andy McAllister*, WPCAMR to go over the initial project management as we begin to develop the survey and target the community watershed organizations and Conservation Districts across PA; Suggested following up with *Matt Miller*, [PACD](#) to get a complete list of Conservation Districts that are in AMD impacted counties, if we didn't already have a list to target for the survey; *Tali* reached out to *Molly Burns* with PACD; Cliff provided EPCAMR and WPCAMR with a link to his Google Drive with documents related to the survey outline; Provided Cliff with a copy of EPCAMR's historic watershed group GIS map of the community organizations from more than 20 years ago when there were over 45 groups in the region; EPCAMR also provided a copy of our older [Watershed Manual](#) that was developed years ago; Held a Zoom Conference call on the project on February 16th; The webinar was scheduled for April 10th in the evening; EPCAMR received a link from WPCAMR to a published article by George Mason University from 2021, that we did not receive a copy of once the research was completed, although we had participated in the research with GMU; It's entitled, "[Abandoned Mine Land Program: Examining Public Participation in Decision-making](#)." ; They found barriers to public engagement that could be mitigated with non-profit involvement for a just transition away from fossil fuel resource extraction; Reviewed a flyer created by Natalie LaMagna, SRI, inviting people to participate in the upcoming webinar to announce and outline the survey purpose and goals; Worked on pulling together links and resources to historical programs that funded AMD, AML, and watershed restoration work in PA and Nationally for a background document with WPCAMR and SRI

Keep Communities Flowing Grant through American Water Charitable Foundation for a Watershed Assessment of the Little Shickshinny Creek/Paddy Run/Rocky Run Watersheds in the Southern Wyoming Valley (proposed)

- Prepared a grant for **\$18K** to conduct a watershed assessment of the Little Shickshinny Creek, Paddy Run, and Rocky Run (both tributaries located on SGL 250) and the area of SGL 55 in the Shickshinny Area and the former Stackhouse Coal Colliery on the west side of the Southern Wyoming Valley; Funding will allow for the assessment of the water quality, any AMD sampling, fishery assessment, and aquatic organism passage (AOP); Partners pulled together by EPCAMR are the Luzerne Conservation District, PA Game Commission, 5 Mountain Outfitters, PA Chapter

of the Native Fish Coalition, Stanley Cooper Chapter Trout Unlimited, Columbia County Chapter of Trout Unlimited; Funding would allow for the purchase of a new field HACH Spectrophotometer and a YSI Multi-parameter probe; EPCAMR has the support of the local PA American Water affiliate through our partner and colleague *Susan Turcmanovich*

Technical Assistance

- Provided *Don Wolcott*, PhD, Carbon Nuture Corporation with contacts for several Anthracite coal operators in the EPCAMR Region since he had requested assistance in reaching out to them to source material from coal refuse piles for feedstock into the manufacture of polymers some of which could have biodegradable properties; The ideal material will have trace intermediate metals such as Fe, Mn, Cu, Co, Mg, etc.; The owners of most refuse piles are the coal companies and he was seeking sites to be able to purchase some of the refuse material; He'd like to take samples from various locations and have a detailed elemental analysis conducted in their laboratory; Based on suitability, larger volumes would be required for further mechanical testing as a polymerized product, and then they could begin with commercial production as a part of their business plan; Provided Don with contact information for Pagnotti Enterprises, the PA Game Commission, and the PA DCNR, all owners of abandoned mine lands and culm piles
- Provided *Mike Kenn* who requested information from EPCAMR on Mine Pool Geothermal applications and resources
- *Renee Carey*, [NorthCentral PA Conservancy](#) introduced Chase Douglas and Ben Alexandro, with Chesapeake Conservation Partnership to EPCAMR and WPCAMR to discuss a concept suggested by Deb Nardone, Foundation for PA Watersheds, that goes a little against the normal through of use of "conservation lands."; She suggested looking at where AMD treatment is needed and what parcels are needed to treat that land and land trusts/conservancies working to secure the land to ensure the AMD treatment can happen and have it transferred to State Agencies; Reached out to Chase to set up a future discussion on the topic and provided him with some insight on the issue related to the SMCRA Law definitions of abandoned mine lands and the legal implications for future treatment and operation and maintenance long-term
- Received a new code from [Aviation Supplies & Academics, Inc.](#) (ASA) to access free sample practice exams for obtaining a Part 107 Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) license to fly drones; EPCAMR Executive Director has been studying to take the test to obtain a license as a Remote Pilot in Command (RPIC) in order for EPCAMR to utilize our drone for other technical assistance services that we can provide to our partners and Conservation Districts in our region
- EPCAMR followed up with *Meg Cole*, [STAC](#), to see if the final report was compiled and released on the research surrounding nitrogen and phosphate nutrient removal in AMD; EPCAMR was informed by *Austin Smith*, Life Scientist with the Science, Analysis, and Implementation Branch of the Chesapeake Bay Program Office, US EPA Region 3, that the publication was supposed to be finalized in mid-March tentatively and then would be available since they are excited about reviewing our comments, data, research, and references cited
- Provided *Kelly Dessoie*, [Focus Journalism](#) contact information for sites (Lehigh Engineering and the Underground Miners at the Brooks Mine) where she could access coal lands to get some video and photo footage of abandoned mines

- Provided Earth Conservancy with a summary of water quality data and nutrient loadings that were found in the Askam AMD Treatment System along Dundee Road, Hanover Township to discuss the findings of the review of the sampling data; Informed *Terry Ostrowski*, EC, that we were awaiting the final publication of the STAC report and research that had been compiled over the last year on nitrogen and phosphate nutrient removal in AMD
- Received a [State Inventory Tool](#) (SIT) update on behalf of EPA's State and Local Climate and Energy Program; Coal mining production and abandoned coal mining activity data were updated to align with the U.S. GHG Inventory; The Projection Tool allows users to create a simple forecast of all emissions through 2050, based on historical emissions from the 1990-2021 timeframe and uses population data that aligns with the U.S. GHG Inventory
- *Janie French*, Headwaters Charitable Trust, mentioned to EPCAMR the need for future contingency plans for future AMD projects through the Section 319 Program; Cliff Denholm, SRI provided an example of one from Western PA
- *George Kauffman*, Executive Director, [Pocono NE RC & DC](#) forwarded EPCAMR's C-SAW application to the USGS after taking a look at it; George was confident that they could help with stream flow monitoring and gauging
- Followed up with *Lasha Wyma-Klein*, [Keystone Mission](#), to let her know that EPCAMR will gladly donate 40 Waterboxxes for their Community Garden in the City of Wilkes-Barre; Provided her with some EPCAMR maps and statistics of some analysis we did on Coalfields Food Desserts
- Informed *Megan Beste*-District Director for Congresswoman *Susan Wild*, that there were no coal refuse piles in Lehigh and Northampton Counties like there are for Carbon County because Northampton County is out of the coalfields and into the slate belt; Funding available is for SMCRA-eligible sites for reclamation; EPCAMR copied *Alicia Karner*, Lehigh Valley Regional Director from the PA DCED Governor's Action Team who thought there may have been some shuttered coal-fired plants in her region, which there were none; Provided them both with contacts for PA DEP Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation (PA DEP BAMR)
- Reviewed the 2023 Annual Water Quality Monitoring Report from the Friends of the Nescopeck (FON) on the data and flows gathered throughout the year at various monitoring locations throughout the watershed established by FON and EPCAMR
- Provided technical assistance to *Tali MacArthur*, POWR, on some of her ideas for a grant proposal for targeted-based consultant assistance to community watershed groups across PA; Provided her with regional organizations to reach out to and some of the identified needs that EPCAMR has seen over the years that watershed groups and Conservation Districts need to build capacity from within their communities; POWR is considering an application to the [Chesapeake Small Watershed Grant Program](#) (April 3rd deadline) that provides grants up to **\$150K** for projects that enhance local capacity to implement future on-the-ground actions through community-based assessment, planning, design, and other technical assistance-oriented activities
- Participated in a meeting with *Leigh Ann Henry* and Brian Derenick, from [Verdantas](#) to see if are future opportunities where EPCAMR can work with them on abandoned mine land reclamation, watershed restoration, and watershed assessment projects in the EPCAMR Region

- *Elke Mugova*, Mine Water Researcher, from [IMWA](#) and South African Research Chair for Mine Water Management, provided EPCAMR with a link to a USAMIN online course on mine pools and mine pool hydrogeology that she suggested that we could take for professional development if we were interested; EPCAMR Executive Director planned to catch up with her at the April IMWA and West Virginia Mine Drainage Task Force Meeting in Morgantown, WV to discuss further; She follows EPCAMR's work in PA
- Participated in a Microsoft Teams call on the proposed Hazleton Beltway Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Project discussion with PA DEP BAMR and Hillwood developers interested in economic development in the area; The Problem Area needs to be created for the features in the area before an application can be submitted for funding under AMLER
- Meeting with [Teichos Energy](#) Staff at the EPCAMR Office to review AML work related to solar development on their site in the Hazleton Area and to discuss possible future work together

Education & Outreach

- Participated in 4 weekly PA AML Campaign calls
- Provided a Zoom interview on EPCAMR's work and the description of the environmental professional jobs of the other Staff at EPCAMR to *Michell Jaramillo* and *Albina Gil Aralla* from Wilkes University as a part of one of her courses where students have to interview two environmental professionals
- Provided *Jeff Painter*, P.G., PA Game Commission, Bureau of Wildlife Habitat Management/Oil, Gas, and Management Section with EPCAMR's Quarterly Board Meeting schedule so he can attend when he's available
- Received approval for the Meaningful Watershed Education Experience (MWEE) 101 Online Course Certification from *Krysta Houge-Ryall*, ERT Inc., Environmental Communication Specialist, from the NOAA Environmental Training Center, as a part of the MWEE Certified Ambassador Course
- Participated in a Zoom call with the Columbia County Conservation District, Catawissa Creek Restoration Association (CCRA), and other partners on reviving a new membership base in the Catawissa Creek Watershed; Discussed development of a new website and way to accept donations through Zeffy, to be set up by EPCAMR
- Participated in the Middle Susquehanna RiverKeeper's Vernal Partnership School Environmental Expo at the Montour Nature Preserve where **1000** attendees came through the event
- Participated in the February 2024 Environmental Justice Advisory Board Planning Meeting in preparation for the 2024 EJAB Meeting; The Executive Director's reappointment to the EJAB for another 2-year term was approved by PA DEP Acting Interim Secretary *Jessica Shirley*; Additional members to EJAB were announced; EPCAMR submitted additional documents to the PA DEP Office of Environmental Justice; Provided a [link](#) to the EPA's 2023 Equity Action Plan to the Chair of the EJAB; Participated in another discussion with the Choose Clean Water Coalition on a panel discussion as a part of the EJ Workshop at the May 2024 CCWC Conference

- Pennsylvania Governor *Josh Shapiro* announced the release of a 10-year economic development plan; PennFuture and Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania circulated a sign-on letter that highlighted their concerns about the plan while urging the Shapiro Administration to continue on their campaign platform to forge a new path towards a clean and sustainable economy that supports workers and protects the climate; This means incorporating meaningful investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency to reach Pennsylvania's goal of reaching 30% renewable energy by 2030; EPCAMR followed up with *Annie Regan*, PennFuture Campaigns Director, and signed on to their letter and mentioned rare earth elements, solar on abandoned mine lands, and mine pool geothermal as some potential areas of interest to consider for renewable energy projects over the next decade
- Provided *Mike Gondell*, Western Pocono Chapter of Trout Unlimited with Outdoors Writer *Tom Venesky's* contact information; EPCAMR confirmed attendance at the White Haven/Western Pocono Chapter Trout Unlimited Trout Expo on June 1st at the White Haven Library
- *Leigh Ann Henry*, EPCAMR Board member sent along several links to potential educational grants for our review and consideration
- Messaged *Leah Mercik*, Senator Casey's Office to ask her to thank Senator Casey for co-sponsoring the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA); Senate bill ([S.1149](#)); EPCAMR appreciated Senator Casey's stalwart support for increased and dedicated funding for Pennsylvania's fish, wildlife, and the habitats on which they depend
- Provided *Bill Conlogue*, Marywood University Professor in the School of Humanities, with permission to use a photo taken by the Executive Director or EPCAMR of the Old Forge AMD Borehole in the Lackawanna River Watershed that he would like to use for the front cover of a Temple University Press publication
- [Cleaning Up Orange-Stained Streams in PA's Coal Communities Takes Significant Investments and Tireless Grit Reimagine Appalachia](#) blog posted with a video interview with the Executive Director of EPCAMR funded by the [Energy Foundation](#); The blog and video was shared with the Reclaim Working Group by *Dana Kuhnline*, and was shared by Congressman Cartwright's social media
- Reached out to the PA DEP Office of Energy Office to *Robert Young* to see if the Assessment Report on Solar on Previously Mine Lands has been published or scheduled for a release to date
- Provided *Dan Shailer*, with background information on abandoned mines and AMD during a Zoom Interview
- Call with *Al Budinsky*, [TerraCon](#), about working with EPCAMR to apply for a future grant through their foundation for some of our environmental outreach efforts in the region
- Call with *Duane Feagley*, PA Anthracite Council to give him an update on EPCAMR's work in the region and to welcome him back to the EPCAMR Board
- Participated in a webinar prep prior to attending the CCWC Bay Day event in Washington DC

- Participated in a Getting Greener: Sustainable Lives, Businesses, & Communities Zoom Conference call led by Congressman Cartwright's Office; It's a part of a series of six calls focused on finding inspiration and resources to grow a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable life, business, community, and a regional economy; This is a community of practice for community and economic development advocates and professionals willing to put in the work for a more sustainable PA08; Each meeting will open with a short talk on strategic planning & implementation issues, grants, & other resources with experts and special guests followed by time for participants to share; EPCAMR was invited to participate as a resource to others in the Congressional District at large

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

26th PA AMR Conference Planning for 2024

- Paid the final bill for the scholarship rooms for the 25th Anniversary Conference from the Altoona Grand Hotel; Followed up with *Matt Miller*, PACD, to see if he knew when the Fall Watershed Specialists Training was going to be held to avoid any conflicts with our planned PA AMR Conference for October 22-24th

2024 PA Fish & Wildlife Diversity Forum with the PA Fish & Boat Commission and PA Game Commission

- EPCAMR received a lodging scholarship from the PA Biological Survey to participate in the Forum on March 7 & 8th, to provide input to update the PA Wildlife Action Management Plan; EPCAMR was invited to participate and provide valuable input and ideas related to watershed restoration and reclamation of abandoned mines and the potential for restoration and reclamation projects that could involve wildlife habitat and stream improvement projects

Mine Pools As Resources Conference at Penn-State University (*proposed*)

- EPCAMR continued to work with *Steve Chrismer*, Shamokin Creek Restoration Alliance (SCRA) to assist in the development and planning of a one-day conference or symposium on discussions around the utilization of mine pools as beneficial resources throughout PA in State College, to be hosted by Penn-State University

Junior Achievement Inspire Career Exploration Experience at Mohegan Sun

- EPCAMR was asked once again to set up an educational exhibit on our work to reach out to **3000** students from **18** schools in the greater Luzerne and Lackawanna County areas on April 17th; Reached out to *Ruth Corcoran* to confirm attendance at the event

Luzerne Conservation District EnviroThon Event

- EPCAMR Executive Director was requested to assist with the Current Issues topic of Sustainable Renewable Energy by the Luzerne Conservation District to provide an overview to all of the high schools teams that were participating in the 2024 EnviroThon and to assist with grading of the tests; EPCAMR will be able to provide an overview of EPCAMR's work in Luzerne County and the region; EPCAMR confirmed attendance at the study day on April 2nd and the competition day on April 23rd at Camp Kresge, White Haven

Project WET Climate, Water, and Resilience with a MWEE Flair Educator Workshop

- EPCAMR Executive Director received a Professional Development Certificate of Completion from PA Project WET and PA DCNR from January 23rd

PROP Conference in July 2024

- EPCAMR Executive Director requested to be a speaker at the conference to provide an update on our abandoned mine land reclamation project at Swoyersville

North Branch Land Trust (NBLT) NAI Outdoor Educator Bootcamp: *March 9, 10, & 23rd*

- EPCAMR helped our partners promote through our social media outlets that applications are now open to NEPA residents for the North Branch Land Trust's [2024 Outdoor Educator Bootcamp](#) sponsored by [DiscoverNEPA](#). The certification [program](#) will be taught by educators from the Pennsylvania Department of Natural Resources (PA DCNR) Bureau of State Parks in partnership with the National Association of Interpretation (NAI) where participants can become certified as a Certified Interpretive Host (CIH)

Middle Susquehanna RiverKeeper Vernal Pool Expo at the Montour Preserve

- EPCAMR set up our exhibit on AMD/AML at the Expo outside of Danville that had drawn a crowd of over **1000** people/families through the Preserve on February 10th; EPCAMR brought our trout puppets, VR Headsets to experience and AMD Treatment System in the Nanticoke Creek and an iPad version for the students as they learned about AMD

Community Volunteers

- Followed up with *Ted Merriman*, a former EPCAMR volunteer who came to the area several years ago for the Centralia Cleanups led by EPCAMR up until 2021; EPCAMR let him know how to follow our future community cleanup events on our social media page; The area looks relatively clean these days down there

EPCAMR Program Administration

- Reconciled EPCAMR's Checking Account and PA Invest Accounts in QuickBooks; Paid Health Care Premiums for EPCAMR Staff for the February 2024 with Highmark and United Concordia; Paid EC the rent; Made EPCAMR deposits to FNB
- EPCAMR sent out our 1st Quarter Board Meeting notice for February 15th around to our Conservation Districts and Board representatives and watershed groups in the region; Convened the 1st Quarter Board Meeting; Forwarded a Zoom link to those members that needed access virtually to attend
- The EPCAMR Executive Committee reviewed the documents for the Single Audit and EPCAMR finalized the Representation Letter and the final filing of the documents for 2022 with Kohanski & Co.; Sent copies of EPCAMR's Board Meeting Agendas and Minutes to Kohanski & Co.; Updated the documents to [The Federal Audit Clearinghouse \(fac.gov\)](#) and informed Kohanski & Co.; PA DEP was able to pull the Audit information from the FAC website and confirmed with EPCAMR that it had been downloaded
- EPCAMR has contracted with Ignite Business Services, Inc. and *Marianne Beane*, Co-CEO/Lead Consultant, to be our bookkeeper and accountant since Denise's departure in January 2024; Worked in Quickbooks; Scanned receipts and deposits into Neat Receipts; Met with her towards the end of the month and began to organize and transfer our QuickBooks Desktop Environment over to the QuickBooks Online platform with all of our files; Discussed our monthly needs and quarterly needs when it comes to financial management at an initial onboarding meeting

- Suggested to *Brandon Whitman* to send along his cover letter and resume to EPCAMR for review and consider if he was interested in a part-time Watershed Outreach GIS Technician position
- *Jeremy Bailes*, Financial Analyst I, with PA Invest informed EPCAMR that he is our new contact since our former Analyst Denise had retired
- EPCAMR Executive Director was nominated to become a returning Board Member of the Pocono NE RC & DC that meets quarterly throughout the year
- Completed the February 2024 Monthly Report for both the 319 Program and for Board Reporting and forwarded it to *Mike* to upload to the website