



Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation

Robert E. Hughes, Executive Director

101 South Main Street

Ashley, PA 18706

Main Line: (570) 371-3523

E-mail: rhughes@epcamr.org

Website: www.epcamr.org

June 2020 Progress Report

Project Coordination

Mill Creek/Gardener Creek Coldwater Conservation Plan Project

- *Shawnese* and *Steve* created a Recommendations Field Sheet for when we conduct culvert assessments and field investigations to determine what projects could be recommended in the watershed as a part of the development of the CHP Plan; Ordered a historical resource book, "Wilkes-Barre, The Diamond City", on the City of Wilkes-Barre for details on the watershed and landscape from years past to include in the CHP Plan

PA American Water Mill Creek Temperature Monitoring Project

- EPCAMR was awarded a **\$7500** grant to set up monitoring stations throughout the Mill Creek watershed; Completed the W-9 and forwarded it to *Steve* to send along to PAW; *Susan Turcmanovich*, Public Relations at PAW will be creating a release and sending it out to social media

Huntsville Creek Coldwater Conservation Plan Project

- Provided *Brandyn Ayers*, Horizon Footage, with EPCAMR's logo for inclusion in his drone footage of the sites we've chosen to fly to include in the CHP Coldwater Conservation Plan Story Map; Signed a agreement with Horizon Footage for the completion of the work on the project

Upper Toby Creek Watershed Coldwater Conservation Plan Project

- Requested an update from *Kathleen Lavelle-TU*, on when EPCAMR might receive the final report on the Fishery Survey completed by TU with EPCAMR so that we could include it in the Appendix of the [Final Plan](#) that has already been produced to complete the full documentation of the Plan that was developed by EPCAMR

Reclaiming Our Backyards in the Coalfields Appalachian Tree Planting Project

- Followed up with *Claudia* from ISI on EPCAMR's pending invoice for the 1st Quarter 2020 before we submit our 2nd Quarter request for funds; ISI will be sending it along

Food by Youth Appalachian Collaborative with ISI and Groasis

- Provided *Claudia* and *Pam* from ISI, an updated on the raised bed construction community garden at the Restored Church in the Heights section of Wilkes-Barre that EPCAMR assisted in constructing to provide donated Growboxxes, seeds, and plants to the volunteers who gardened and taught the youth about how small coal town patches like the City of Wilkes-Barre had originally planted their own gardens in their backyards; Shared photos and positive feedback from Wilkes-Barre City Councilwoman *Beth Gilbert-McBride*, who assisted with the project and was fully supportive of the effort;
- Informed *Claudia* and *Pam* about yet another 8 community raised bed gardens in the north end of the City of Wilkes-Barre on a vacant lot yard with permission of the landowner on N. Main Street, being led by *Ranee Dantone*, *Kristen Rose*, and *Rose Yanko*, organizer for a small group called “Our Community Garden”; EPCAMR assisted with the construction and worked with area children to plant the beds
- Continued to support two additional community gardens being constructed by Our Community Garden at the New Roots Recovery Center, in the City of Wilkes-Barre; Reached out to *Joey Artmont*, Restored Church, to obtain a list of materials needed to construct the raised beds because *Greg Griffin*, volunteer Coordinator for the Wilkes-Barre City Blight Committee had offered to provide some donated resources to the Water Street community gardens

Mocanaqua AMD Discharge Tunnel Consumptive Use Mitigation Feasibility Project

- Worked with Mike to provide final comments on the final draft summary of the report at the request of *Pierre MaCoy*, SRBC prior to them submitting it to the full Commission

Mine Mapping Grant Project with the Mine Subsidence Insurance Program

- *Keith Previc*, Mineral Resources Program Specialist-PA DEP let us know that the Commonwealth was updating their VPN system related to our access to the PA Historic Underground Mine Mapping Inventory System (PHUMMIS)

Reclaiming Appalachian Coalition Innovative Mine Land Reclamation and Economic Development Projects Mini-Grant Program

- Informed AC Power, one of our solar developer partners in the mini-grant that EPCAMR was awarded **\$7000** to develop a GIS Solar Site Selection Criteria Tool for the Anthracite Region of NE PA with an additional **\$3000** in in-kind matching funds from Downstream Strategies, another partner in the project; Received the mini-grant agreement from the Reclaiming Appalachia Coalition, signed it, and submitted it; Signed on to a petition on [Change.org](https://www.change.org) to support the expansion of PA Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards (AEPS); Read a copy of AC Power’s Letter of Support for HR 4248 that was submitted to Congressman *Matt Cartwright*; Convened a Zoom call with AC Power, Downstream Strategies, and Appalachian Voices to review the scope

Trout in the Classroom Program

- EPCAMR Staff along with the PA Fish & Boat Commission and Luzerne Conservation District met at Pavlick Road in Plymouth Township, Luzerne County to release near **140** rainbow trout in to Harveys Creek that EPCAMR raised throughout the year

Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT) Meaningful Watershed Environmental Education Program with the Wilkes-Barre Area School District

- Worked with *Laura Rinehimer*, EPCAMR Environmental Education Coordinator to draft and prepare a news release on the **\$5000** grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust

Swoyersville/Harry E. Reclamation and Community Athletic Area PA AML Pilot Project

- Reviewed and filed the June 2020 Inspection Report from the Pottsville District Mining Office sent by *Joe McCarthy*
- Provided *Carol Burrell*, Accounting Supervisor-Keystone Reclamation Fuels Management with an update on reimbursements from January and February 2020
- Received correspondence from *Gerard Schmidt*, PA DEP BAMR Project Developer that Keystone Reclamation Fuels Management was seeking a request for an extension of the project due to the pandemic and economic downturn in the market to move the waste culm material and shutdown at the Co-Gen Plant temporarily; Reached out to Keystone to determine their response to questions from the PA DEP BAMR and to ask whether EPCAMR needed to respond in turn to the PA DEP BAMR

RECLAIM Field Fund Mini-Grant Project from the Just Transition Fund

- EPCAMR was awarded a **\$3000** grant from the Just Transition Fund through the Blue Green Alliance and Appalachian Voices, to continue to support the development of materials, communications, and coordination of meetings and discussions on the RECLAIM Act; Participated in a monthly National RECLAIM Working Group conference call

OSMRE/AmeriCorps VISTA Stewards Individual Placement Program (SIPP)

- Followed up with *Kyle Argenziano* to ensure that his references completed their application forms for submission to Stewards Legacy
- Received the OSMRE/VISTA MOU Application Forms from *Josh Jones*-VISTA Development Coordinator and worked on completing all the paperwork and continued working on securing funding for the position with the support of the Foundation for PA Watersheds

Technical Assistance

- Participated in several Advisory Committee Zoom calls to finish up the revisions to the PA Environment and Ecology and Science and Technology Standards for the State; Created content and revisions before making revisions to the State Advisory Board for the PA Department of the Education
- Provided *Mike* with an interesting [link](#) on measuring flow, TSS, and TDS Methods
- Worked on updating the 2020 [PA Clean Water Legislative Briefing Book](#) for 2021 with volunteers from PennFuture and the Choose Clean Water Coalition and was asked to provide input on AMD, reclamation, energy, and stormwater issues
- Provided *Matt Slavoski*, Staffer for Congressman *Matt Cartwright* with contacts for Trout Unlimited within the Congressman's District

- Participated in several days of the PA Department of Education Contents Committee Zoom call 65-member workgroup to develop the updates to the PA Environment & Ecology Standards and Science & Technology Standards led by *Beth Ratway*; EPCAMR was selected to provide content due to our long history of water quality education and outdoor environmental education in our mining impacted watersheds across the Commonwealth, our involvement with schools and teachers across our region, and state-wide involvement with PAEE
- *April Niver*-Economic Development Director for Congressman Cartwright's Office forwarded an opportunity for EPCAMR to review for consideration for future funding; The EDA has several [funding](#) opportunities; [FY 2020 Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs Notice of Funding Opportunity \(PWEAA NOFO\)](#). [EDA Coronavirus](#) program details; One of the main criteria for an EDA project is that it creates and retains jobs
- Worked with *Mike* to produce an Excel file of **55** proposed projects that were submitted to the US ACE for consideration under several funding sources at the Federal level and possibly would qualify under the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2020
- *Paul Otruba*, EPCAMR Volunteer, and Upper Susquehanna Riverkeeper, Tioga County, asked if there were any reclamation projects in need of sediment that is located behind at least 12 dams in PA; He estimates that 100,000 million cubic yards behind 4 hydroelectric dams alone in the Susquehanna River watershed; He figures conservatively, 150 million cubic yards of sediment available, 1 billion tons dry, will cap 31,000 acres at 3' deep or 49 sq miles of the estimated 250,000 acres of abandoned PA mine lands

Education & Outreach

- Informed EC that ARIPPA Award Application Mini-Grant was available on our EPCAMR website for 2020
- Asked by *Justin Dula*, NE Regional Environmental Justice (EJ) Coordinator to have EPCAMR be a part of a virtual panel presentation on mining and reclamation efforts in the Northeast Region of PA before the Environmental Justice Advisory Board on August 11th; EPCAMR Executive Director accepted the invitation; Provided *John Brakeall*, PA DEP EJ Office with photos to use in a newsletter article for the PA Office of EJ; Participated in a Skype conference call with the PA DEP OEJ on the Scranton Area Roundtable Planning discussion
- Reached out to *Jay Ostrich*, Legislative Staffer for Representative *Scott Perry* to schedule a field tour in Dauphin County to AMD and AML sites within his Congressional District in the Bear Creek and Wiconisco Creek Watersheds (near the Sheridan Banks) and to determine what the Representative's position is on HR2, Reauthorization, and the RECLAIM Act

- Reached out to *Patrick Rooney*, Legislative Staffer for Representative *Dan Meuser* to determine what the Representative's position is on HR2, Reauthorization, and the RECLAIM Act since he has so many abandoned mine land features and AMD impacts within his Congressional District
- Forwarded a RFP for TU and Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (TRCP) for video production work to a colleague of EPCAMR's *Scott Cannon*, Video Innovations, who does great work at the request of PennFuture
- Shared an [article](#) on coal surety bond pool liabilities for mine cleanups across the country to EPCAMR's social media
- Participated in the Chesapeake Accountability Project's Climate Group webinar with the Choose Clean Water Coalition to discuss mine pools, abandoned mine reclamation, carbon sequestration and tree plantings, and flooding issues as they relate to climate change in the coalfields
- Prepared a [Letter to the Editor](#) to the Citizens Voice that was published to give reasons why community members and political leaders should support the Reauthorization of the Abandoned Mine Land Trust Fund in the coal region and across the country; Submitted the LTE to the Hazleton-Standard Speaker, Scranton-Times Tribune, and the Times-Leader; Sent the LTE around to the PA AML Campaign and the National RECLAIM Working Group
- *Dr. Andrea Nerozzi*, Wyoming Seminary inquired about whether or not EPCAMR had any geothermal data on Solomon's Creek AMD Boreholes since a few students were interested in studying the potential for electrical generation; EPCAMR only has limited water quality data on the borehole and is willing to provide it to the students
- Created a social media post on EPCAMR about the new House Infrastructure Proposal, *The Moving Forward Act*, that includes Congressman *Cartwright's* Northeastern PA Priorities including abandoned mine reclamation, AMD cleanup, and economic development and job creation for the region; [Press Release](#) on the Proposal; [HR 2](#) passed in the legislature; [Fact Sheet](#) on HR 2
- EPCAMR received a **\$500** donation from Keystone Reclamation Fuels Management towards a Little Free Library demonstration project constructed by the EPCAMR Executive Director to be painted with recycled iron oxide AMD pigment that will be moved around for children to be able to pick up donated books during the Summer 2020 and beyond; Placed the Library in the City of Nanticoke
- Interviewed by *Annie Bristow*, reporter about EPCAMR's work in the region related to abandoned mine land reclamation and AMD remediation
- Participated in a PA AML Campaign call to discuss the status of pending legislation related to abandoned mines across the country; Reviewed PA DEP BAMR's new [YouTube channel with](#) AML videos

- EPCAMR offered comments to *Mr. Casey Hammond*-Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management U.S. Dept of the Interior on the OSMRE's Proposed Amendments to the Federal Regulations Related to the Issuance of Ten-Day Notices to State Regulatory Authorities by requesting an extension of the comment period of at least 60 days, and public hearings in at least 4 coal impacted regions; EPCAMR signed on to the Citizens Coal Council [letter](#) signed by many national organizations requesting the same
- Reviewed a press release on the [Barasso-Enzi Bill](#) related to Reauthorization provided by *Thom Kay*, Appalachian Voices
- Participated in the one day [NEPA Day of Giving Campaign](#) to raise some funds for EPCAMR which will be matched through the Scranton Area Community Foundation's funding network

Community Volunteer Coordination

- Directed *Kyle Argenziano* and *Levi Sunday-Leftkowitz*, EPCAMR Summer Watershed Interns to participate in a SLIP run virtual Intern Seminar; Submitted a reimbursement to SLIP for the month of May for the interns to *Anthony Melf*-Project Coordinator, EDSI Solutions; Provided the interns with EPCAMR business cards for the summer for outreach within the communities that we serve
- Worked with Patagonia Action Works to create an ad for social media to promote EPCAMR's cleanups in the region and in Centralia, PA
- Conducted a community cleanup in N. Wilkes-Barre along N. Main Street and surrounding blocks in partnership with the Our Community Garden group and the Wilkes-Barre City Blight Committee in the Mill Creek watershed; The City of Wilkes-Barre donated the use of the City dumpster at the Public Works garage for any trash collected
- Signed up *Sean Bieski*, Nanticoke as an EPCAMR volunteer to become a Lead Observer in Aquatic Organism Passage in order for him to take the free online certification training

Conferences, Training, Tours, Exhibits, & Workshops

- Participated in a monthly PA AMR Conference Planning Committee call; Followed up with Conference Sponsors to ensure that they were still supportive of our conversion to the Virtual Conference format given the current pandemic

- Participated in a General Session Webinar to learn more about Reimagine Appalachia; EPCAMR endorsed the framework later in the month due to its parallels to our PA AML Campaign priorities that are in support of reclamation, alternative energy projects on abandoned mine lands, and economic development job opportunities in the coal regions of the country; Communicated with *Annie Regan*, Clean Energy Program Manager for PennFuture about EPCAMR's interest in become a supporter of Reimagine Appalachia
- EPCAMR Executive Director was made an Admin on the [WHOVA App](#) to access the Dashboard for the layout and design of the Virtual PA AMR Conference 2020; Participated in a Zoom call with *Mike* and *Paolo Cruz* from WHOVA for a rundown on the App; Received a checklist for planning our virtual event from WHOVA
- Worked with *Dr. Andrea Nerozzi*, Wyoming Seminary to submit a co-presentation, 100-word abstract to the PA Art Education Association (PAEA) Art Education Conference to be held in October 2020 on our *STEM and Art: Changing the Perspective of Local Waterways Hexagon Project*; In the project, 9 students produced a mural composed of hexagonal panels that tells the story of how mine outfalls are formed, the effects of the outfalls on local waterways and potential solutions; The mural was reproduced as a banner for EPCAMR to use in its programs; Along the way, the students went on field trips, attended lectures and prepared watercolor paints using pigment processed from mine sediments; Although the number of students directly involved in the project is small, their educational efforts reached hundreds of people, through direct and virtual exhibition of the paintings and banners
- EPCAMR Executive Director completed a 25-hour professional development certificate course through Cornell University entitled, *Network Climate Action: Scaling Up Your Impact*; Provided examples throughout the online course of impacts of climate action in EPCAMR's region that has its share of problems with flooding, mine pools, flash floods, and climate in our mining impacted watersheds; Received a certificate of completion

EPCAMR Program Administration

- Reconciled EPCAMR's Checking Account and PA, Invest Accounts; Paid Health Care Premiums for EPCAMR Staff for June 2020 with Highmark; Paid Verizon and Internet monthly bills; Paid EC the rent; Balanced EPCAMR Checking Register; Made a deposit to FNB for incoming reimbursements and accounts receivables; Provided Denise with the May 2020 Statement for reconciliations
- Provided *Geoff Shaw*, EC with EPCAMR Executive Director's email address to use to allow for future scheduling in the EC Conference Room on their internal Google Calendar
- Released 30 IP addresses back to Verizon Wireless that were being held by EPCAMR temporarily for future equipment needs
- Nominated *Dr. Andrea Nerozzi* for a PEC Environmental Partnership Award for her work on our *STEM and Art: Changing the Perspective of our Waterways Hexagon Project* with the students at Wyoming Seminary

- Received additional health and procedure protocols for slowly transitioning some time back to the EC Office by *Terry Ostrowski*, EC CEO, that was forwarded to the EPCAMR Staff; EPCAMR Executive Director and Management reviewed and drafted a Return to Work Policy approved by our Executive Committee upon review and comment and protocols that fell in line with EC's protocols; EPCAMR Staff held an outside meeting on June 19th for everyone to discuss how we can move in and out of the office periodically and still conduct field work, in addition to doing remote work; All Staff signed the new Policy for everyone's protection and so that they all understood the guidelines and requirements that were being put in place for all of our safety and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic; July 6th would be the first date that EPCAMR Staff could transition periodically into the Office with due caution
- Obtained the necessary signatures from the EPCAMR Executive Board members to complete the process of our renewal for our Coal Mine Operators license with the PA DEP to continue our work with the Harry E. Swoyersville AML Reclamation-Community Athletic Area Pilot Project; Submitted the proper documentation to the Commonwealth
- Prepared a letter of support for *Mike Dziak*, retiring CEO of the Earth Conservancy (EC) for the PEC Thomas P. Shelburne Award Nomination and submitted it to EC
- Introduced *Donald Chapman*, Nittany Paper Mills, Inc. who is interested in becoming a member of EPCAMR to our work through a phone call; He informed me that he'd follow up with *Duane Feagley* from the PA Anthracite Council and then get back to EPCAMR
- Completed the June 2020 Board Report