

Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation



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October 2023 Progress Report

Project Coordination

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

- Received the September Invoice from Keystone Reclamation Fuels Management for review and processing with PA DEP BAMR for the hauling, excavation, and transportation of the waste culm from the site to the Co-Gen plants in Panther Creek and Northampton

Penn-State Collaborative National Science Foundation Project (proposed)

- Worked with PSU's *Dr. Thandazile Moyo* and *Dr. Kaitlyn Spangler*-Assistant Professor-Community Development and Engagement, Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology, and Education on the Dynamic Integrated Socio-environmental Systems ([DISES](#)) National Science Foundation proposal to look at mining landscapes, a few landscapes in transition (even to solar), and an abandoned mine land or post mining landscape that already has solar on it; EPCAMR Executive Director provided feedback and comments on the initial proposal draft, suggestions, as well as links to other more recent research and projects that they might want to consider referencing

Technical Assistance

- EPCAMR informed *Kristi English*-PA American Water Source Water Protection Program Manager that since EPCAMR has completed the Coldwater Conservation Plan a few years ago for the Huntsville Creek, Lower Toby Creek, and Upper Toby Creek Headwaters, we've focused on a few other watersheds on the eastern side of the Wyoming Valley more recently in Solomon's, Warrior Creek, Newport, and Nanticoke Creeks; We've been seeing a lot of implementation projects going forward that were recommended in our assessment plans; Maybe in another year ahead we would like to focus on some other watersheds if funding becomes available to look at Shickshinny Creek, Hunlock's Creek, and Harvey's Creek. Only a few areas are mining impacted, so it's more difficult to get funding for the smaller areas that need to be assessed; EPCAMR has been helping *John Levitsky*, Luzerne Conservation District Watershed Specialist on occasion with riparian stream corridor restoration plantings over the years in the Harvey's Creek Watershed with PA Aqua; *Kristi* was updating their Source Water Protection Program Report for the year to provide to the PA DEP and the virtual meeting conflicted with our coordination of our PA AMR Conference so we provided the information ahead of the meeting

- *Holly Douglas*, Cosmos Technologies, reached out to EPCAMR to follow up with us after some time has passed; Since that time, they have received funding from a PA DEP Growing Greener grant to treat an aluminum AMD discharge in Saltlick, PA; The project was extremely successful and now that they have a built unit, they are looking to move it to another site for testing; They are interested in knowing if EPCAMR has a site in mind where this process can work since the mobile unit is scalable and has a small footprint; They are interested in our work with King's College on the work of the students and rare earth elements research since they are also assessing the recovery of rare earth elements; EPCAMR reached out and informed *Frederick, Sebastian*, and *Holly* that a better time to reconnect would be in mid to late November following our 25th Anniversary Conference coordination to discuss further
- Provided *Randy Perry*, Surveyor-Northeast Surveyors, LLC, with a few links to good stream maps that he was requesting; Provided him with the PA DCNR's [online mapping system](#), PA DEP's [Integrated Waters Report](#). And [PASDA's](#) GIS layers that are available for streams that can be downloaded

Education & Outreach

- Participated in 4 weekly PA AML Campaign calls; Informed those on the call about the pending nominee, *Laura Daniel-Davis* who is expected to become the Acting US Department of the Interior Secretary based on the [news](#); She had spoken at a previous PA AMR Conference
- *Leigh Ann Henry*, EPCAMR Board Member provided EPCAMR with a link to [Jenny Hetro](#), for future inquiries as a resource when it comes to strategic planning, branding, or marketing of EPCAMR's work should grant funds become available or included in future grant budgets to help get the word out on our work in the region to a wider audience; Her name was mentioned by Leigh Ann during last month's Strategic Planning Committee Zoom call
- Provided *Sara Ramotnik*, Choose Clean Water Coalition with contact information for Justin Dula, PA DEP Office of Environmental Justice since she was looking for someone to draft up comments on Environmental Justice for the 2024 Legislative Briefing booklet
- Conducted another interview with *Brad Bouck* and his lab partner *Rocky*, from Wilkes University via Zoom to answer questions they had about EPCAMR and our work and the environmental career path and day to day operations of EPCAMR and the Staff in our line of AMD work, AML reclamation, environmental education, and outreach efforts
- EPCAMR informed *Ryan Hurt*-Penn E & R that after talking with *Robert Young* from the PA DEP to see whether or not they were able to provide Professional Development Hours (PDHs) for the July Solar Summit on AML that they were not able to coordinate an effort within the State to qualify the presentations for PDH credits like we do for our annual PA AMR Conference; EPCAMR suggested that he count the total number of hours of each of the presentation combined and use those numbers to see if they qualify for PDH by the approving body he submits them to for credit
- Provided *Michele Giles*, who works for the Nature Conservancy with resource links and information on AMD and AML issues in PA so that she can provide *Senator Fetterman's* Office with information; EPCAMR informed her that we work with *Cody Forgach*, in his Wilkes-Barre

District Office; She passed along the information and links to educational information to his DC Staff and was appreciative of the resources

- Promoted on EPCAMR's social media ways that our community groups can provide comments on the new policy for Environmental Justice in PA with a link to the [article](#) that outlines how everyday citizens can participate and become engaged, in particular around the EJ communities that are in the mining impacted watersheds that we work in throughout the region
- Reviewed a draft of the short promo video for the STEM Camp from Reiner Productions and provided some comments and feedback before *Annie* finalized the video clip
- *Steve Chrismer*, Bucknell University had informed EPCAMR that he had a chance to talk with the PA DEP Secretary Negrin when some from PA DEP came to Shamokin last week for the Environmental Justice stakeholder meeting; *Steve* asked if there was a contact person in the State government that he could recommend to explore the possibility of tapping into mine pools for geothermal energy, among other potential uses; He provided a contact and *Steve* is interested in having a call to further explore these possibilities; EPCAMR to follow up with a phone call to *Steve*
- ARIPPA is considering producing a video for our 35th anniversary next year; EPCAMR provided *Cristy Sweeney* with [Rare Light Media's](#) contact information
- [HR 185](#) was introduced this week directing the Joint State Government Commission to conduct a study on the feasibility of using geothermal energy technologies that utilize abandoned mining locations and operations in this Commonwealth and issue a report; This is great news and a great opportunity to look at the mine pools for geothermal energy as another alternative energy source that could benefit our environmental justice communities in the coalfields and create an entire new industry; They are right. The UK is booming with mine pool geothermal applications; Reviewed the [Coal Authority's](#) posts on their website; Determining the size of the mine pools and volumes is another story; That work remains to be done on a more detailed and thorough basis, as EPCAMR has said in our Mine Water Resources Report over a decade ago
- *Danny Tomares*, who works on Coal Communities programming at National Association of Counties (NACo) reached out to EPCAMR since we work in coal impacted communities; He referred us to an opportunity for future technical assistance, however, they are for eligible Counties to apply for under the Building Resilient Economies in Coal Communities ([BRECC](#)) Action Challenge; Applications are now open for the Building Resilient Economies in Coal Communities (BRECC) Action Challenge, a one-year technical assistance program for coal-impacted communities. BRECC's Action Challenge is a competitive opportunity to receive individualized capacity-building support, collaborate with peers and develop an economic diversification strategy; The BRECC Action Challenge will empower community teams to advance projects for economic revitalization; EPCAMR provided *Danny* with a contact for Luzerne County and let him know that we had talked with *Briggs White* from the Department of Energy and the IWG and suggested that they come out east to the Anthracite Region for a community meeting with our partners; We didn't know if Luzerne County was aware of the grant opportunity that is due in November, so we passed it along to the County grant writer, but didn't receive any follow up or correspondence from her

- EPCAMR received a reply from *Senator Casey* on our letter to him to support federal Good Samaritan legislation as they move forward in the Western Hardrock Region when it comes to community volunteers, non-profits, Trout Unlimited chapters, and organizations that are trying to clean up AMD across the country
- [Fitsum Weldegiorgis](#), University of Queensland, Sustainable Minerals Institute at the University of Queensland in Australia requested that EPCAMR participate in a survey study on coal transition and regional economies; He's working in partnership with the CAES Energy Policy Institute, based at Boise State University in the US; He asked to interview the EPCAMR Executive Director for a study, in connection with his PhD research, focusing on Australia, Canada, the US; The study aims to understand the views of different local groups in connection with the potential shift from coal in regional economies; Findings could help stakeholders make more informed decisions that will shape the sustainability of future economies; Followed up with Fitsum and informed him that the Executive Director had just met and spoken to *Amanda Cahill* in DC from [The Next Economy](#), from Brisbane, Australia, who was a speaker at the Just Transition Fund National Convening Conference
- *Tim Cuevas*, Science Teacher for [Commonwealth Charter Academy](#) requested whether or not EPCAMR Executive Director could provide an online presentation to his 8th grade students before the school year is out; EPCAMR agreed to find a time to make a presentation and suggested that they take a look at our 3D VR Environment [Tour](#) on the desktop platform for the Askam AMD Maelstrom Oxidizer Treatment System as a part of the presentation; EPCAMR suggested that after our STEM environmental education website is live that we can refer to that as well in the middle of November 2023
- Provided background information on EPCAMR to The Luzerne Foundation for the WishList Book they are creating for area non-profits that will be in digital distribution and provided to donors
- EPCAMR is trying to schedule a meeting with *Jerome Whittington*, New York University, who visited the EPCAMR Region months ago and is looking to have some follow up discussion on AMD impacting our various watersheds and communities
- EPCAMR sent out a reminder for the November 1st evening EPCAMR Science & Education Committee Meeting; Discussed with *Dr. Andrea Nerozzi* the possibility of having a few students shadow the work of EPCAMR as a part of the PA Junior Academy of Science (PJAS) Program
- EPCAMR Executive Director set up a zoom call with Wyoming Seminary's *Mike Silverman*, a sponsoring faculty member, who runs the Business Club that has students interested in doing some marketing via social media for EPCAMR; Potentially, they may be interested in attending the field tour or a separate one as well;
- *Mariah Davis*, from the Choose Clean Water Coalition's Equity Workgroup is hosting a call on November 15th from 11am-12:30pm with various EJ state representatives; They are looking to hear from EJ groups like EPCAMR, who is also a member of the CCWC to learn more about how NGO's and members of CCWC can get involved in statewide EJ work; EPCAMR Executive Director agreed to get on the call to give EPCAMR's perspective on working in coalfield communities and mining impacted watersheds across Northeastern and Northcentral PA

- EPCAMR filled out a survey on an updated Energy Work Plan for the Choose Clean Water Coalition provided by *Rosa E.P. Hance*, Energy Policy Contractor for the CCWC; EPCAMR specifically noted needs not being met in the area of AMD assessment, treatment, organizational capacity issues of groups to be able to actively participate in meaningful dialogue and discussions, mine pool geothermal advocacy, solar on abandoned mine lands advocacy, monitoring needs, and the potential for rare earth elements in AMD for domestic production of energy

Community Volunteers

- EPCAMR Executive Director coordinated on October 4th the Nay Aug Avenue Natural Playground Renovations with iron oxide staining of the park structures and planting of trees with our partners, the PA American Water Company, Lackawanna River Conservation Association, and the Lackawanna Valley Heritage Authority; EPCAMR went around to shop for the supplies at Lowe's needed for the project; **22** volunteers will be from PA American Water, **2** from LRCA, and **2** Staff from LVHA; Submitted a receipt for reimbursement to LVHA for the additional 2 gallons of stain that had to be picked up at Gleco's in Scranton to finish up the work at the playground

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

25th Anniversary PA AMR Conference

- Reached out to *Robbie Matisek*, *Senator Casey's* Office to see if had time in his schedule to either appear as a guest speaker for the conference or would like to have a statement read at the event by one of our organizers or another Staff member who could make it on his behalf; We would like to give him some time to mention any thoughts he has on the STREAM Act, BIL funding, Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation, and AMD Treatment; We are getting close to the conference now and would be able to show his video if one can be pre-recorded; Coordinated another PA AMR Conference Planning Committee call on Zoom on October 5th to nail down some of the finer details and hanging threads before the conference in a few weeks; Followed up with *Josh Glace-Larson* Design Group on their exhibit, sponsorship, and whether or not they had a presentation they wanted to make; *Josh* responded that LDG would not need to make a presentation and were just happy to sponsor, exhibit, and network at the conference; Ordered the recycled cups with the 25th Anniversary logo on them for the conference; As it turned out, the Enterprise vans had a recall and we were not able to rent them at all for liability reasons that we were informed of just two weeks before the event even after obtaining our additionally insured Certificate of Liability Insurance riders for Enterprise through POWR; EPCAMR cancelled the rental vehicles with no costs incurred; The PA AMR Conference Committee decided on renting a charter bus from Fullington in State College that was able to accommodate us the week before the conference; EPCAMR paid for the contract in full on the way down to Altoona, PA on the Monday of the conference; Followed up with NASLR on Dinner counts and train ride counts for their events that are coinciding with our conference; Worked with *Andy McAllister*-WPCAMR to come up with some questions for PA DEP *Secretary Negrin* at the conference, but later found out that he was not able to attend; *John Stefanko*-PA DEP Secretary of Active and Abandoned Mines, will say a few words in his place; The PA DEP sponsorship of the event had been approved and a check will be sent to WPCAMR; Signed off as a witness on the "Notice to Enter the Altoona Water Authority", which is the location of one of the AMD treatment sites on the tour and forwarded the document back to *Anne*-WPCAMR; The Committee tried to see if OSMRE could cover the costs of the program brochure printing as they had done in previous years,

however, with the potential for a government shutdown, it was decided to obtain another quote quickly for the printing of the program booklet, so EPCAMR reached out to Center City Print and they provided a quote with a great price; The Committee reviewed the final program brochure and survey for last edits and grammar before sending over to Center City Print for printing; EPCAMR picked up the programs before leaving on Monday, the week of the conference; The survey was just printed on plain white paper in-house at EPCAMR; Sponsor and Exhibitor posters were printed in-house on EPCAMR's large scale plotter/printer in color; Finalized the sticker and logo for the front of the Conference Packets that will be stuffed on Monday evening of the conference by members of the Committee in the hotel lobby at the registration area; Finalized getting enough borrowed hard hats for the tour of the Revloc Co-Gen Plant through ARIPPA from Ebensburg Power that will be picked up by *Tom Grote*; Received the Mayfly Award bios and bullet points from *Anne-WPCAMR* for the presentations at the conference at two different times during the event; Followed up with *Brett Connell* from [Trutta Solutions](#) that is an Exhibitor for the conference who is looking for contacts in PA who deal with Abandoned Mine Lands Economic Revitalization (AMLER) projects; *Liz Cooper*, Staffer for Senator Casey's Office came to the conference and had a few remarks from the Senator to give at the opening of the conference; *Elliot Copeland*, Staffer for Senator Fetterman's Office was also present but deferred not to speak; EPCAMR put the hard copy surveys into the mail for *Anne* so that she can tally them and see who completed them that were requesting Professional Development Hours (PDHs); *Anne* completed the PDF Certificate Forms and have our signatures on them already; Convened the Post Conference PA AMR Conference Committee call to evaluate how all things went and some items that need to be completed post conference with the Altoona Hotel and Fullington Bus Tours; EPCAMR wrote a check out to NASLR for those who attended their dinner/tour

USGS Nanticoke Creek Watershed AMD Tour, Luzerne County with Earth Conservancy

- EPCAMR facilitated the coordination and scheduling of an AMD tour and watershed restoration and reclamation overview tour within the Nanticoke Creek watershed with Earth Conservancy Staff and USGS professionals from around the country who are interested in investing time and infrastructure funding into the Northeast Region of Appalachia and would like to consider the Anthracite Coal Region for some of their resources and funding; EPCAMR Staff participated in the tour of the Nanticoke Creek watershed and filled in the USGS Staff on ongoing and planned projects for the watershed initiated by the Earth Conservancy and EPCAMR

ARIPPA Annual Conference

- Exhibited and presented with *Anne Daymut-WPCAMR* at the conference to announce the 2023 mini-grant award winners before the packed crowd of ARIPPA attendees in Harrisburg on October 4th; Past winners and [recipients](#) are on the ARIPPA website; Following the Conference, *Cristy Sweeney* sent EPCAMR and WPCAMR a message thanking us for taking the time to present and let us know that the Co-Gen Industry as a whole really appreciates the work of both Coalitions and our watershed and Conservation District partners in the region

Just Transition Fund National Convening Summit

- EPCAMR Executive Director attended the Just Transition Fund National Convening Summit as a scholarship recipient to present on EPCAMR's work in PA and to network with the various Interagency Working Group (IWG) agencies and their Staff to learn about additional funding programs available for watershed restoration work and economic development opportunities back home in the coalfield watersheds we work in; Discussed the need for organizational capacity building and funding for Staff before many of the smaller non-profits can apply for and administer such large grants that are being opened

Wyoming Seminary Upper School AMD Tour (planned)

- EPCAMR is working on getting a date for an AMD watershed tour with students and *Dr. Andrea Nerozzi* in late November after the Thanksgiving Holidays and or the first week of December to Solomon Creek, Nanticoke Creek, and the Swoyersville Reclamation Project

ARIPPA Coal Refuse/Abandoned Mine Reclamation Tour for National Environmental Journalists in April 2024 (planned)

- ARIPPA is working with someone that wants to put together a coal refuse/abandoned mine reclamation tour as a part of a national conference of environmental journalists in April 2024; ARIPPA would like EPCAMR to be a part of the tour and planning ‘

Misericordia University Sustainability Symposium (planned)

- *Linda Auker*-Program Director of Environmental Studies at Misericordia University requested that EPCAMR join the University as an exhibitor and at their Sustainability Symposium on December 4th, 2023 from 9am-5pm, which is open to the Misericordia community and public. Students from their Issues in Sustainability course will be designing posters and handouts on the UN Sustainability Goals and students from our Research Methods in [Environmental Studies](#) will be presenting on their research from 12-2pm; The Symposium will be held in Insalaco Room 218 and Concourse

PA DCNR Community Connections to Our Watershed Tour-Lackawanna Valley (planned)

- EPCAMR Executive Director coordinated with *Tony DeSantis*, [PA DCNR](#) Environmental Education Specialist for the Lackawanna State Park to plan for the November 3rd Lackawanna Valley Watershed AMD Tour with *Bernie McGurl* and *Tara Jones*, Lackawanna River Conservation Association; The Old Forge AMD Borehole will be visited and sampled, the Jermyn Outfall, and the Powderly Creek Dam, on Aylesworth Creek (where a AMD treatment system known as an oxic limestone drain) is located to neutralize the acidity in the headwaters before entering the Aylesworth Dam; EPCAMR Staff, LRCA Staff, and *Tony* got up to the Old Forge Borehole location during the week before the tour to knock back the invasive knotweed along the culvert down to the outlet of the borehole to improve access to the site; *Tony* sent around a link to [A River Reborn](#) to all the students participating

Interagency Working Group (IWG) Catalyzing Economic Development in PA's Energy Communities Summit

- EPCAMR Executive Director was invited to attend the Summit and be a panel member by *Briggs White*-Department of Energy to talk about EPCAMR's work in Northeastern PA on AMD and AML projects, community partnerships, educational efforts, and assessment work on October 20th, at the [Summit](#) at Westmoreland County Community College in the Pittsburgh region; However, earlier that week, he was attending the Just Transition Fund International Convening Summit in Washington DC and had a previous commitment for the 20th with the USGS, another IWG agency partner back in his hometown where he was leading an AMD Tour with them; It was impossible to be in two places at once and under short notice, he wasn't able to make any changes to his schedule that was already full and committed; Followed up with *Briggs* and offered to host a similar meeting in Northeastern PA at our Office Conference Room at the Earth Conservancy if the IWG member representatives wanted to come to the Northeast and see the great work being done by our partners in mining impacted watersheds as it relates to AMD, AML, economic development, alternative energy development like solar on abandoned mine lands, and workforce development

Misericordia University Environmental Science Class AMD Tour

- EPCAMR Executive Director coordinated a tour of the southern Wyoming Valley to the Solomon Creek AMD Boreholes and Askam AMD Treatment System in the Nanticoke Creek watershed for *Dr. Cosima Wiese's* Environmental Science Class on October 31st

APA Annual Conference

- EPCAMR Executive Director finalized the presentation material with Juan Serrat, PA DEP Office of Environmental Justice on a Teams call; Presented with *Justin Dula* and *Juan Serrat*, PA DEP Office of Environmental Justice on Environmental Justice and AMD/AML issues throughout PA as a part of a panel presentation that was well received at the [APA Conference](#) in Scranton, Lackawanna County on October 15th; EPCAMR Executive Director was on the panel and also is a member of the PA DEP Environmental Justice Advisory Board (EJAB)

EPCAMR Program Administration

- Reconciled EPCAMR's Checking Account and PA Invest Accounts with Denise in QuickBooks; Provided *Denise* with a copy of the monthly bank statement for Quickbooks; Paid Health Care Premiums for EPCAMR Staff for the October 2023 renewal with Highmark; Paid EC the rent; Made EPCAMR deposits to FNB
- Reviewed the bank reconciliations for Kohanski & Co., CPA for the 2022 Audit; Met with *Mark Zavislak* in the EPCAMR Office to review accounts and QuickBooks as well as to provide additional documentation requested and internal control procedures; Updated the Fixed Asset Detail spreadsheet for EPCAMR
- *Jordi Comas*, EJ Coordinator for NC PA informed EPCAMR that a link of ours on the WPCAMR website was broken and should be redirected to the new EPCAMR homepage; We let Anne Daymut-WPCAMR know so that she can take care of it after the 25th Anniversary PA AMR Conference
- EPCAMR received and paid our invoices automatically for payroll services from OneSource for the month of October 2023
- Worked on some of the initial documentation for the new 319 Program Grant Award in the amount of **\$260,000** over 2 years and submitted the names and e-mail addresses to start the online signature process of accepting the award to *Rachel Nelson*-PA DEP; EPCAMR Executive Director will work on other paperwork before the November 20th deadline to submit the documentation to *Trish Attardo*-PA DEP
- Completed the October 2023 Monthly Report for both the 319 Program and for Board Reporting and forwarded it to *Mike* to upload to the website