

## Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation



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### September 2023 Progress Report

#### Project Coordination

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

- Trip to Harry E. Site to take some recent updated photos of the site to send along to *Riyad Barkawi*-PA DEP BAMR that requested a few photos to include in a report to the OSMRE; Meeting with *Hank Zielinski* at EPCAMR to discuss the project and plans for the future Phase II Reclamation plans and future funding needs and proposed grant to be submitted; Prepared a letter for an extension of the project since Keystone Reclamation Fuels Management needed to extend the Government Financed Construction Contract (GFCC) through the PA DEP Bureau of Mining Operations; Received the extension on the project through October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024

##### **Hollywood AMD & Coal Refuse Reclamation into Rare Earth Elements (REE) with Tetra Tech**

- EPCAMR submitted a one-page summary overview of the project to *Cody Forgach*, Staffer in Senator Fetterman's Wilkes-Barre Office and to several Staff in Senator Casey's Office to inform them that our application was submitted for funding consideration; EPCAMR also provided the summary to several Staff in Congressman *Matt Cartwright's* Office and *Andrea Verobish*, Staffer in Congressman *G.T. Thompson's* Office to inform them both of our recent submission; *Paul McCloskey* of [Clearly Ahead](#) scheduled a meeting on Zoom to set up a briefing for Congressman Thompson and Senator Casey's Staff for October 3<sup>rd</sup>

##### **Just Transition Fund Rare Earth Elements Project**

- Provided an update to *Rachel Young* on the recent submission of the Hollywood AMD & Coal Refuse Reclamation into Rare Earth Elements (REE) through the PA DEP AMD/AML Grant Program and work with both Columbia University, Bucknell University, King's College, and Penn-State University where EPCAMR has created some new partnerships that are taking a closer look at critical mineral constituents in AMD; Reviewed a PA House Committee [Hearing](#) on Rare Earth Elements and AMD that was forwarded to EPCAMR by a partner in the Shamokin Creek Restoration Alliance that was held in Western PA; Provided a [list](#) of 17 Rare Earth Elements to *Dr. Margarita Rose* for her Environmental Economics class to choose which elements they will create infographics and do a market analysis on for their assignment; Conducted an AMD Tour with the King's students for the 28<sup>th</sup> of September around the Wyoming Valley

### **Freya Site AML Reclamation Project (proposed)**

- Scheduled a tour of the Beaverbrook East Problem Area in Hazle Township, Luzerne County, with *Jeff Randolph*, BlueCup Ventures LLC, PA, *Mike Brannon-Pagnotti* Enterprises, and DEP BAMR Staff, along State Route 309, to take a look at the priority abandoned mine land features on the site and walk the property; We also discussed it being an impaired headwaters section of the Catawissa Creek where water loss is infiltrating into the underground mine workings

### **NFWF Small Watershed Southern Wyoming Valley Assessment Project**

- EPCAMR requested and received an extension of the project through June 20, 2024 to finish writing up the report on the American Black Duck and Eastern Brook Trout habitat Assessment work completed in the Southern Wyoming Valley Watersheds as well as recommendations for culvert repairs, replacement, and stream restoration projects that could reduce sediment loads in the streams and streambank erosion issues that were noted; The draft outline of the report is complete and sections of the report are being written and compiled

### **Technical Assistance**

- Provided *Sean Kinney*, Columbia University with an estimate on costs for them to purchase [Solinst](#) Water level loggers 5 series for future installation at AMD sites to be determined in the Wyoming and Lackawanna Valleys; Sean ordered 5 of them to be delivered to EPCAMR
- EPCAMR Staff sampled the headwaters of the Loyalsock Creek in Sullivan County and numerous tributaries as a part of a two-day snapshot assessment to determine where additional acidity and acid loadings are coming from into the watershed, or from the natural geology
- Reviewed the highly recommend 2015 Field Conference of Professional Geologists Guidebook: "[Conglomerate, Coal, And Calamites: Geology, Mining History, And Paleontology Of 'The Region': Schuylkill, Northumberland, And Columbia Counties, Pennsylvania.](#)"; Numerous USGS reports have been published on the geology of the anthracite region—many are cited in the above guidebook provided to EPCAMR by *Dr. Charles A. Cravotta III*, US Geologic Survey; EPCAMR and Earth Conservancy will be discussed setting up an all-day tour of the Nanticoke Creek watershed in the Southern Wyoming Valley in the Fall on AMD sites, AMD treatment, stream loss into the mine workings, stream restoration work planned, stream restoration work completed, riparian areas planted, and channel and infrastructure reconstruction needs
- EPCAMR has been following a recent [mine subsidence](#) emergency in Newport Township, Luzerne County, where a 750' vertical shaft opened behind the Rock Street Housing Complex, which is an area we had conducted a cleanup on the other side of the apartments in the recent past; EPCAMR provided links to the Mine Map Atlas for local residents to inquire about mine subsidence insurance; It's the second time the shaft has opened and subsided since 1982; Mine pool water and heavy rains were the likely culprit in the failure of the shaft to remain intact with all the fill material that had been placed in it during the previous backfilling attempt to resolve the issue; Sent the recent update to *Jason Snark*, Philadelphia Inquirer, who was looking for an update on our work in the region
- Sent *Mike Hewitt*, EPCAMR Program Manager, a zip file of lab sample results sent from the PA DEP lab for August's watershed sampling in the Shamokin Creek

- Provided [Dr. Jeff Stratford](#), Professor at Wilkes University is looking to conduct an experiment looking at the effect of deer browse on forest dynamics -particularly in urban environments in the Wyoming Valley with potential sites to plant trees in the Solomon Creek watershed; Wilkes U. is getting trees from Keystone 10 Million trees; His idea is to look at urban sites safe from deer (e.g., behind Chacko's in Wilkes-Barre near Coal Street), then suburban and rural sites with deer. He wants to test the idea of urban sites being refuges for plants from deer; EPCAMR suggested Earth Conservancy property that might be more suitable for the research in the Nanticoke Creek watershed; PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry or the North Branch Land Trust who both just acquired properties in the Wilkes-Barre Township area by the Delaware and Hudson Railroad grade might be more suitable areas for research; WVSA may also have some lands suitable for planting

## **Education & Outreach**

- Received a follow up email from [Coal Creative](#) based on EPCAMR's initial inquiry to their company to see if they could provide a quote for creating a WordPress webpage as a subdomain under EPCAMR's for some of our environmental education resources, curriculum, and videos we'd like to post and upload; They offered to provide us with a referral since they had a minimum price that wasn't within our budget regrettably; *Laura* had reached out to *Marianne Beane* with [Ignite Business Services Inc.](#), who offered up an excellent quote for the work we were proposing; Inquiring Systems Inc. (ISI) is covering the **\$2500** cost of the webpage development, promotion, and marketing; Reviewed *Laura's* STEM Camp flyer and made some comments for additions before we can promote it on our social media pages; Created an Event Page to share on EPCAMR's Facebook page with *Laura's* updated flyer; Reviewed *Laura's* Google Form link for the registration to attend the event; Pushed out the STEM Camp event on multiple social media platforms and shared it to numerous groups on Facebook and to *Mike Corcoran* at Wilkes-Barre Area School District; *Mike Hewitt*, Program Manager created the subdomain for the environmental education resources on the EPCAMR website for *Marianne* to begin working on this Fall; Picked up a folding table at Lowe's for the STEM Camp; Prepped rooms for the STEM Camp a few days before the event; Convened the STEM Camp on September 23<sup>rd</sup> with **19** youth and posted a follow up social media [post](#) and [reel](#) on the successful event; Submitted invoice to ISI for the STEM Camp expenses for reimbursement
- Attended the Art Exhibit on September 1<sup>st</sup> (First Friday) and set up EPCAMR's display and spoke to attendees about our work in the region and the use of iron oxide as a pigment to engage students at the high school level to become more involved in AMD & Art Created a social media post to promote *Emily Baldauff's* Conservation Advocacy Workshop [presentation](#) on behalf of Trout Unlimited at [Artworks](#) in Scranton, as a part of the 2023 Environmental Justice theme art show and exhibit
- Provided a Zoom interview for *Bradley Bouck*, a student at Wilkes University, who was conducting interviews of environmental organizations and professionals in the field as a part of one his classes
- EPCAMR informed the Huber Breaker Preservation Society that the Earth Conservancy was going to be removing a fence around the perimeter of their property soon and are looking for someone to take it before it is scrapped; EPCAMR informed *Don Kane Jr.*, with the HBPS to see if they wanted to fence to inquire with *Geoff Shaw* at the Earth Conservancy as soon as possible

- Participated in a zoom call with [Jasmin Velez](#), Community Engagement-Lead Consultant, with [Good Energy Collective](#), who connected EPCAMR with her Executive Director [Jessica Lovering](#), virtually for a future follow up call; They are interested in talking with communities that have coal plants that may be closing or retiring in the next decade; They would like to understand how host communities are planning for these closures, where they need additional resources, what new economic activity they are looking to attract, and whether they have any interest in new nuclear power projects; EPCAMR informed *Jasmin* that in NE PA, we have Co-Generation Plants that are reclaiming waste culm banks and silt basins and not any coal-fired plants remaining; Southwestern PA has more of the Bituminous coal-fired plants are shutting down or have recently closed; Should they need to reach out to any western PA organizations that are more closely aligned with Bituminous coal-fired plants that may be shutting down, are in the process, or can anticipate closure within the next few years, EPCAMR directed them to the industry leaders themselves through the [PA Coal Alliance](#) and [Rachel Gleason](#); If they are looking to speak to community groups for their perspective, we suggested they reach out to the [Citizens Coal Council](#) [[Aimee Erickson](#), Executive Director would be a great contact] and the [Western PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation](#) [[Andy McAllister](#), Regional Coordinator ([andy@wpcamr.org](mailto:andy@wpcamr.org)) would be a great contact] to see if they can direct *Jessica* to organizations that are in the community of SW PA that they may have much more of a connection to or communication with since they are in their region
- Steve Chrismer*, Bucknell University inquired if EPCAMR would be interested in trying to work on a collaboration with Bucknell to put on a small one day conference on the beneficial use of mine pools and mine pool water in 2024; We think it's a great idea to discuss the concept and future needs and funding that could help refine multi-colliery hydrogeologic units (MCUs) in various watersheds; Knowing where active mining is occurring in the watershed and pump drawdowns are already actively occurring that could affect the standing elevations of various mine pools is a factor to consider as well, so having a understanding of which coal companies are actively pumping from the pools is going to be critical to understanding what's going on underground; Advocating and supporting a future monitoring of any boreholes or shafts or manifestations of the mine pools at flooded stripping pits or discharges to obtain elevations will also be critical; Digging deeper into the mine maps that are now available through the Mine Map Atlas that EPCAMR and some other universities have scanned and catalogued for the Mine Subsidence Insurance Program will also be very valuable going forward; A decade ago, these were not really available to us in digital form; Many maps still need to be digitized, geo-referenced, and converted into mine map mosaics (a quilt of sorts for each layer of coal and the surface mine maps); EPCAMR doesn't believe that there are enough studies on mine pool geothermal being actively completed or funded in PA; That needs to change if we are going to advance the concept for alternative energy projects; EPCAMR would surely be a part of whatever is decided; The topic alone would be great for even a presentation or track at the 2024 PA AMR Conference in State College, Bucknell, or Penn-State University
- Requested by the Choose Clean Water Coalition to draft up some comments on important issues related to AMD and abandoned mine land reclamation that could be briefed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Clean Water Legislative Briefing Book for 2024; The Clean Water Legislative Briefing Book is a valuable resource to share information about the legislative opportunities and threats facing Pennsylvania's waterways with legislators and the public; It has served as a powerful communications and educational tool, highlighting the clean water priorities of the broad Pennsylvania conservation community; Followed up with *Sara Ramotnik*, CCWC to let her know that EPCAMR would work on the draft comments to have to her before October 27<sup>th</sup>

- Followed up with a call to *Megan Beste* who is the District Director for PA Congresswoman Susan Wild, regarding AML reclamation in Carbon County, specifically around Panther Valley; *Terry Ostrowski*, Earth Conservancy CEO talked to her about EC's experience and approach to AML reclamation, but she was searching for partners to address the issues in her district as the local municipalities and land owners are cautious; EPCAMR Executive Director gave *Megan* a call and followed up with a number of resources for her to review and offered additional technical assistance and outreach if needed; She said Summit Hill Borough appreciated the information and didn't realize the abandoned mine land inventory was available to them as a resource; EPCAMR explained the differences between the Priority Numbers in the Inventory to *Megan*; *Congresswoman Wild* has been supportive of AML Reauthorization years ago since her District is impacted by AMD and AML
- Convened the EPCAMR Science and Education Committee Meeting on the evening of September 19<sup>th</sup> with regional Board volunteers on a Zoom call to set some future goals for our outreach and education efforts at EPCAMR across the region
- Reviewed the notes from the EPCAMR Strategic Planning Committee Meeting held on September 21<sup>st</sup>
- Attended the [NEPADOC](#) screening at the Hazleton Art League on September 22<sup>nd</sup> with Director *Dave Heinemann*, as a part of a panel discussion following the film to talk about EPCAMR's efforts and other groups and agencies that are working on abandoned mine reclamation and AMD watershed restoration efforts in the surrounding watersheds; Friends of the Nescopeck were represented
- Worked with *Dr. Andrea Nerozzi*, Wyoming Seminary Upper School, Kingston, to reach out to students and faculty interested in STEM/Humanities or for community service to work with EPCAMR by developing some project opportunities for the students
- Reviewed the monthly update on legislative, regulatory, and industry matters, as well as ARIPPA activities sent along by *Cristy Sweeney*, ARIPPA
- EPCAMR Executive Director was requested to submit a blog post for the Penn-State University's Environmental Resource Management social media page on Facebook to talk about EPCAMR's diversity of projects in the region and his role within the organization; The Executive Director is also an alumni of the PSU ERM Program, Class of '95
- Participated in 4 weekly PA AML Campaign calls

### **American Water Charitable Trust Project**

- Picked up the 75 2024 Iron Oxide Art Calendars from Center City Print; Will need to coordinate with Wilkes-Barre Area School District to come into the class to provide individual copies to the students and the teachers that participated in the class project using EPCAMR's iron oxide pigment to create the hexagon artwork as a part of our education and outreach efforts

## Community Volunteers

- Settled on October 4<sup>th</sup> for 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 alone, thanks to *Susan Turcmanovich*; Coordinated with *Owen Worozbyt*-LVHA on the project

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

### **25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary PA AMR Conference**

- The PA AMR Conference Committee approved 5 additional travel scholarships for *Malcolm Crittenden*, *Larry Hutchinson*, and *Shane Hofious* to attend the conference; *Malcolm* is currently a volunteer grant writer for the Conemaugh Valley Conservancy and *Larry* is with the Shade Creek Watershed Association, both organizations are working on AMD issues in western PA; *Shane* is a Watershed Specialist for the Clarion County Conservation District; *Jon-Marc Burdick* is a Watershed Technician with the Cameron County Conservation District; *Ben Wenger* is a Conservation Specialist for the Indiana County Conservation District; EPCAMR Executive Director informed each of them of their scholarship award and instructions on how to proceed with obtaining their room accommodations at the Altoona Grand Hotel; *Larry* ended up rescinding his scholarship for an individual room and was happy to bunk up with his friend and colleague *Tom Grote*, who is also a scholarship recipient; EPCAMR and WPCAMR are bringing backup projectors for the Conference; Coordinated with *Shaina McNally*, our Conference Planner to tie up some loose ends prior to the conference; Held a joint call with NASLR about the Conference planning; The PA AMR Conference has been having difficulties locating passenger vans for the tour for **45** people and are still seeking vans and may have to resort to going to Fullington for a charter bus; EPCAMR was able to secure a passenger van in Kingston and a 7 passenger SUV in Altoona and discussed logistics with *Anne*-WPCAMR; **22** Exhibitors are registered; Convened a second call in September later in the month after coordinating logistics at the facility between NASLR, the PA AMR Conference Committee, and the Altoona Grand Hotel; Beanies were paid for and will be shipped to EPCAMR; Conference registration has reached a max of **175** due to the capacity of the facility so we had to shut down the registration early to the conference; *Anne* received the 2 Mayfly Awards from *Michael Bestwick* and paid for them; The pending federal shutdown possibility made the Committee have a backup plan of trying to obtain pre-recorded videos or PowerPoints of their presentations for several federal OSMRE employees that were speakers who might not be able to attend or speak in the event of an actual shutdown; However, we were informed that if there is a Government shutdown, there are strict rules about the performance of work; OSMRE employees would not be able to present virtually, or attend virtually, as that would constitute work; This doesn't affect the US Department of Interior or the Office of Inspector General presentations; Finalized the AMD Tour route for the Conference because some sites had access issues; Coordinated a conference call of the Committee to keep things rolling as we were getting closer to the conference and tightening up loose ends

## **NTTP AMD Passive Treatment Training for Conservation District Watershed Specialists**

- Finalized the meals and contract agreement with *Jenn West*, Ramada Inn Conference Center Planner and WPCAMR; *Andy McAllister*, WPCAMR Regional Coordinator signed the agreement for the facility rental and rooms; *Jenn* needed to borrow the projector in the one room when we are on the tour on Wednesday since we will be gone all day Worked with WPCAMR Staff to facilitate and convene the implementation of the NTTP AMD Passive Treatment 3 Day Course with OSMRE and PA DEP BAMR in State College for County Conservation District Watershed Specialists; Drove with *Andy* to pick up the passenger van at Enterprise in State College for the tour portion of the training; EPCAMR and WPCAMR added valuable insight and resources to the training that was led by *Jon Smoyer*-PA DEP BAMR and *Brad Schultz*-OSMRE; On several occasions, the two Coalitions were able to make presentations and provide educational comments and resources to the attendees; Made a request to *Dan Snowden*-PA DEP for a directory or resource list of state-wide limestone quarries that provide various types and sizes of limestone (i.e.. high calcium carbonate, various percentages of limestone (dolomitic, etc.) that the attendees could use for future grants, cost estimates, quotes, replenishment of existing systems to treat AMD, or for future anticipated systems that may come online and need limestone; EPCAMR thought it was something that either PACA or the Aggregate Advisory Board might have readily available; Dan provided some references to pass along to the attendees; The first resource is a compilation document published by the PA Geological Survey – the Directory of Nonfuel Mineral Producers in Pennsylvania: [Directory of nonfuel-mineral producers in Pennsylvania \(pa.gov\)](#); This resource contains the names, addresses, telephone numbers and web site links to all producers of nonfuel minerals in the Commonwealth; The second resource is the PA DEP Bureau of Mining Programs web site which lists the [Mineral Industries](#) by County; **21** attendees completed the training and received certificates in September 2023

## **APA Annual Conference**

- Worked with *Justin Dula* and *Juan Serrat*, PA DEP Office of Environmental Justice to have a Teams call to pull together all of our slide decks for the presentation on Environmental Justice and AMD/AML issues throughout PA as a part of a panel presentation at the [APA Conference](#) in Scranton, Lackawanna County on October 15<sup>th</sup>; EPCAMR Executive Director is on the panel and also a member of the PA DEP Environmental Justice Advisory Board (EJAB); Submitted EPCAMR's registration information to *Kim Gusic*-Conference Planner, and that we didn't need any additional AV equipment other than the computer in the room to add our USB drive to upload the presentation

## **Dangerous Openings AML Tour with PA DEP Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation**

- EPCAMR Executive Director was requested by the PA DEP BAMR Office to stop by and provide a tour and overview of the history and tragic disaster of September 6, 1869, of the historic [Avondale Mine Site](#) in Plymouth Township, Luzerne County to a dozen mining professionals from across the country as one of their stops on a Dangerous Openings AML Tour throughout the Northeast Anthracite Region; The site is now a trailhead and had a dangerous opening that was reclaimed by PA DEP BAMR and beautified by EPCAMR, other partners, and the now owner of the 6.5 acres, the Plymouth Historical Society

## **Annual Peace and Justice Awards Dinner**

- EPCAMR Executive Director attended the International Day of Peace and Justice Awards Dinner at Newberry Estates, Dallas, to receive the [David A. Frey Community Service Award for Peace](#) for his work in the region and EPCAMR's work throughout Northeastern PA

- Provided some dates in the early Fall to *Sean Kinney*, Columbia University for him and a few of his graduate students to travel west from New York into the Wyoming Valley for an AMD Tour of discharges in the region

### **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 September 2023 renewal with Highmark; Paid EC the rent; Made EPCAMR deposits to FNB
- EPCAMR received and paid our invoices automatically for payroll services from OneSource for the month of September 2023
- EPCAMR will be reviewing our previously submitted Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) documentation for a future renewal since in 2022 we didn't get a response from the state agency on our application renewal; Followed up with *Leigh Ann Henry*, an EPCAMR Board member to answer her questions she had about the application process since the state website didn't have a very good FAQ section; Her company, [Verdantas](#) is interested in possibly making a donation
- Provided a W-9 to Columbia University for EPCAMR and reviewed their Services Compliance Checklist while *Sean Kinney* was finalizing the project scope for the installation of the transducers and sampling of several of the AMD sites for rare earth element analysis at their lab in New York; Registered with PaymentWorks
- Completed the September 2023 Monthly Report for both the 319 Program and for Board Reporting and forwarded it to *Mike* to upload to the website