



## 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](mailto:rhughes@epcamr.org)

Website: [www.epcamr.org](http://www.epcamr.org)

## September 2020 Progress Report

### **Project Coordination**

#### ***Huntsville Creek Coldwater Conservation Plan Project***

- *Shawn Rummel*, TU provided EPCAMR with a copy of the final Fish Surveys for the Upper Toby Creek and the Huntsville Creek that we can now include with our CHPs

#### ***Mill Creek/Gardner Creek Coldwater Conservation Plan Project***

- EPCAMR Staff and Interns conducted culvert assessments and looked for watershed issues in the Mill Creek/Gardner Creek watershed on September 1<sup>st</sup>
- *Bob Kent*, EPCAMR volunteer informed EPCAMR of a geocache in the Mill Creek watershed and sent along some pictures of the area where he has fished in the past

#### ***Rare Earth Elements Monitoring with Tetra Tech PA 2019 PA AML Pilot Grant (proposed)***

- Due to unresolved issues related to complying with both federal and state regulations and requirements governing these types of federal grant funds including 2CFR200 – the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards; PA's Management Directive on Grant Administration; and PA's Procurement Code, EPCAMR was not able to award AML Pilot funds now through grants

#### ***ISI Food by Youth and Appalachian Apple Tree Planting Project in Centralia***

- Sent some information along to *Laura England*, in Portland, Maine, on the Groasis Growboxxes; She was looking for specific [gators](#) as a water conservation practice for planting trees in the City of Portland so EPCAMR provided her with a few vendors
- Followed up with *James Pagnotti*, Pagnotti Enterprises about an opportunity to obtain free trees to plant along the Old Highway 61 through our partnership with PEC, OSMRE, the Appalachian Region Reforestation Initiative, and SRBC
- Followed up with *Joe Sapienza* about filming the tree planting in the Spring 2021

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

- Hosted a zoom meeting with the EPCAMR Staff and the Reclaiming Appalachia Coalition mini-grant partners to update them on the project and hear about other projects
- Hosted a meeting with AC Power and EC on September 28<sup>th</sup> at the Office to update them on the status of the project and to show them the GIS Solar Site Selection Criteria Tool that we have under development

- *Frank Sindaco*-EPCAMR GIS Watershed Outreach Specialist created a GIS Workflow Flow Chart for EPCAMR

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

- Prepared a letter of extension for the project through October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021 given the current situation of the pandemic and submitted it to PA DEP BAMR; The energy market conditions for the waste coal fuel and electrical generation have not had a chance to rebound nor do they see a turnaround occurring in the short term; The Coronavirus pandemic simply has stagnated the near-term uncertainty within the market; Furthermore, the pandemic may have a longer-lasting impact since it appears no one fully understands how the markets will rebound and when; Keystone's plan is to maintain and secure their assets so they can continue to comply with the regulatory standards until they can begin to remove more waste coal material
- PA DEP BAMR sent a blanket request for extensions for all funded 2017 PA AML Pilot Projects in July 2020 and were awaiting an official response before informing EPCAMR of an approved extension; Participated in a conference call with PA DEP BAMR on the project to receive an update on the extension

***Loyalsock Creek Watershed Monitoring/Sullivan County Conservation District/Loyalsock Creek Watershed Association/White Ash Land Association***

- EPCAMR Staff sampled several AMD treatment systems in the Loyalsock Creek and other monitoring locations throughout the watershed
- Completed the Loyalsock Creek TU AMD TAG and EPCAMR Snapshot on September 2<sup>nd</sup> with TU, Lycoming College along with Susquehanna Chapter TU and the Loyalsock Creek Watershed Association, Sullivan County Conservation District, and the White Ash Land Association; An electroshocking survey was completed on September 22<sup>nd</sup>
- *Gloria Norcross*-Sullivan County Conservation District Watershed Specialist, let EPCAMR know that she was going to try and open one of the valves with the key at the pond at the second treatment system with permission from the PA DEP BAMR, although it is seemingly stuck to open the valve to lower the depth of the water in the pond; The valves at the C-Vein Treatment System are quarter turn valves; In most cases when the passive systems are constructed, the valves they install are what the supplier has in stock; The last valve PA DEP BAMR replaced, they had to dig it up to find out detailed specs before they could order a replacement; *Brandon Zimmerman*-PA DEP BAMR believes that the valve at the C-Vein Settling Pond is not fully closing causing some water to pass through the pipe and it usually takes two people to open and close the valves at this site
- *Coordinated another tour with Board Members of the Loyalsock Creek Watershed Association through Marc Lewis*-President by providing him with *Ted Lowden's* contact information for White Ash Land Association to inform them of their desire to tour the two AMD treatment sites on September 23<sup>rd</sup>

## ***Southern Wyoming Valley NFWF Small Watershed Planning & Technical Assistance Project***

- EPCAMR Staff attended the Press Event on September 2<sup>nd</sup> coordinated by *Congressman Cartwright* to announce the grant at the Nay Aug Natural Play Area, Scranton and spoke to the media; Choose Clean Water Coalition and NFWF put out a release separate from the Congressman's Office; [Citizens' Voice article](#)
- Reached out to *Peter Marx*, CCWC to request some contacts for Ducks Unlimited to discuss the project with them and try and learn some information about the American Black Duck habitat and how to assess them properly; *Jim Feaga*, Regional Biologist for DU and *Nikki Ghorpade*, are regional contacts and *John Levitsky*, from the Luzerne Conservation District was referred, but is already a partner
- Provided *John Levitsky*, Luzerne Conservation District with EPCAMR's narrative and scope for the project as it related to the American Black Duck and native Eastern Brook Trout for his review since he's a partner in the project and has done extensive work previously on the American Black Duck habitat
- Participated in a call with Ducks Unlimited Staff to get more information and make some networking connections with additional Staff and partners to learn more about the American Black Duck and duck species and habitats in general
- *Cathy Haffner*-PA Game Commission, suggested that EPCAMR create an account to use the COA Tool found with the [Wildlife Action Map Plan for PA](#) through the PA Game Commission; The Plan and the Tool are being presented at the PA AMR 2020 Virtual Conference; *Cathy* provided EPCAMR with the Wildlife Action Plan American Black Duck (ABDU) species account that has general information regarding threats, actions, monitoring, and research and survey needs to help with our NFWF project; The COA Tool queries this type of information in an Area of Interest for Species of Greatest Conservation Need that are known or likely to occur, so EPCAMR will run a report within the potential project areas, knowing that the report is driven by observed locations and habitat suitability models, which means that if ABDU doesn't show up in the report, it doesn't necessarily mean it's not there, the PA Game Commission just don't have a record of it
- Provided *Gary Gronkowski*-President of the Nanticoke Conservation Club with our Project Area Map and requested any information or knowledge that any of the members might be able to contribute related to the American Black Duck, since many of them are duck hunters
- *Molly Giles*-PA Game Commission Habitat Biologist provided EPCAMR with additional resources on the American Black Duck

## ***Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's Community Conservation Team Do It Yourself Monitoring (DIY) Project (proposed)***

- Worked with *Kyle Argenziano*, EPCAMR OSMRE VISTA to submit a grant to purchase some DIY Mayfly water quality monitoring equipment to place in our mining impacted watersheds to gather data and to use as educational tools with youth and in our virtual learning outreach; With very little explanation and comments back, within a few weeks the grant was not funded because we were not considered to be in one of their focus areas for this year

## **Technical Assistance**

- Sent a follow up message to Mayor *Paige Cagnetti*, City of Scranton, to provide her with some information on the public services that EPCAMR is willing to provide to the City if she needs any assistance on watershed related projects in mining impacted areas; EPCAMR Staff and the Executive Director introduced ourselves to her at the press event for the NFWF grant announcement at Nay Aug Natural Play Area; Provided her a copy of some of the work we did for the City of Wilkes-Barre on Green Infrastructure BMP recommendations that may be applicable to the City of Scranton in the future under their MS4 Program for stormwater management
- Provided *Branden Diehl*-Foundation for PA Watersheds Staff contact information for [WVIA](#)
- Discussion on the potential for a large-scale storage project in the Silver Creek Watershed in Schuylkill County with the Schuylkill Headwaters Association, Schuylkill Conservation District, AES, and PeakPowerHour; *Bill Reichert*-Schuylkill Conservation District is reaching out to have a group discussion with DRBC about the project's potential

## **Tetra Tech AMD Monitoring at the Old Forge AMD Borehole**

- Began discussions with Tetra Tech to develop a professional service monitoring agreement for the Old Forge AMD Borehole for several months in 2020; Developed a proposal for services following an investigation of the state of the original pressure transducer and stilling well originally installed by EPCAMR and the Lackawanna River Conservation Association (LRCA); Tetra Tech is interesting in obtaining water quality data, flow data, in preparation for determining the type of possible design concept of an AMD treatment system for the Old Forge Borehole; Tetra Tech provided the parameters that need to be collected and the Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) and samples collected will be sent to Hawk Mountain Labs; *Jon Dietz*-Tetra Tech will provide EPCAMR with disposable 60 mL syringes and 0.2 uM syringe filters and coordinate the auto sampler rental for the continuous sampling during a storm event; EPCAMR added Tetra Tech as an Additionally Insured to our Certificate of Liability Insurance following contacting *Angela Vitkoski*-POWR

## **Education & Outreach**

- Participated in a monthly Choose Clean Water Coalition partners Zoom call to get updates on legislative initiatives and to discuss projects around PA and within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed
- Requested that our President and Treasurer e-sign some document related to our AMD STEAM in the STREAMS PA DEP Environmental Education grant prepared by the EPCAMR Staff led by *Laura Rinehimer*; Forwarded *Laura* the 2021 PA DEP EE Grant Application

- Provided some ideas to *Lyndsay Tarus*, The Alliance for Appalachia and Appalachian Voices, who are in the early stages of developing strategies to address potentially large amounts of reclamation liabilities that may fall to States in the coming years as coal company bankruptcies start to trigger bond forfeitures (post-SMCRA mine sites)
- Coordinated with *Andy McAllister*-WPCAMR Regional Coordinator on how to develop the AML Reauthorization videos and interviews between EPCAMR and WPCAMR; Met with former OSMRE Director under the Obama Administration, *Joe Pizarchik* and hosted him for a tour of AMD and reclamation sites as we coordinated interviews on September 23<sup>rd</sup> to produce short videos related to Reauthorization and on work that EPCAMR, EC, and other partners are doing in the region and to emphasize the need for additional funding for reclamation, AMD remediation work, and economic development opportunities for job growth; Videos were directed by EPCAMR Executive Director, filmed and edited by *Laura Rinehimer*, EPCAMR Environmental Education Coordinator; Several videos were edited and completed before the PA AMR Virtual Conference in late October 2020
  - Hank Z.-Swoyersville PA AML Pilot location
  - Elizabeth Hughes-Earth Conservancy at Askam AMD Treatment System
  - *Terry Ostrowski*-Earth Conservancy at Bliss Bank Reclamation
  - *Glenn Manahan* - Spring Run Tributary Cleanup Site from last Fall with EPCAMR and WVSA along Empire Street
  - *Kyle Argenziano* -OSMRE AmeriCorps VISTA Steward at the Dirt Road Cleanup Site opposite EC Drive
  - *Joe Pizarchik*- Solomon Creek AMD Borehole
  - *Bobby Hughes*-EPCAMR Executive Director-Newport Center-AMD Water-filled Stripping Pit
  - *Laura Rinehimer*-Huber Miner's Memorial Park
- Registered for Wilkes-Barre's *Boscov's Annual Friends Helping Friends* Fundraiser to raise awareness of EPCAMR; Submitted our W-9; When our supporters shop at Boscov's online or in-store, all they have to do is pick EPCAMR at the checkout and we get 5% of their total expense donated to EPCAMR while they get a 20% discount on their total purchase
- Forwarded a copy of the Just Transition Fund newsletter to all EPCAMR Staff to sign up for because of the number grant funding opportunities that are contained within it
- Facilitated some networking for *Dr. Andrea Nerozzi*-Wyoming Seminary and EPCAMR Board Member with *Diane Madl*-Nescopeck State Park, who was able to provide her with information on the Community Connections to Our Watershed EE Program; Wyoming Seminary now has a Climate Science and Sustainability Concentration (CSSC), and she believes that the Community Connections to Our Watershed Program presents a wonderful opportunity for our students to engage with local issues;

She introduced *Diane* to the sponsors of that program, *Rachel Bartron-Dean* and Co-Director and *Nicole Lewis*-Co-Director, Wyoming Seminary for further discussions with regards to virtual learning opportunities until actual field or classroom instruction is allowable; CSSC focuses on the scientific, economic, and societal implications of climate change on a global scale; The Program pushes students to consider how the concepts learned in coursework are applied in the real world through internships, shadowing, research, and community service; These experiential learning opportunities are integral to the goals of our program and the success of our students, and the value of hands-on learning with your organization cannot be emphasized enough; EPCAMR has this valuable partnership with Wyoming Seminary for over a decade already

- EPCAMR signed on to comments developed by *John Arway* and *Dennis Whitaker* that were submitted in response to the Environmental Quality Board's request for public comment for proposed changes to the Manganese criteria; PA DEP's proposal to lower the manganese criterion from 1.0 mg/l to 0.3 mg/l to protect public health is supported; However, politics and industry are driving a change in the point of compliance from the point of discharge to the point of water supply intake; This will put thousands of miles of PA headwater streams at risk of pollution from coal mines and other discharges of manganese, including AMD discharges and existing AMD treatment systems

## **Community Volunteer Coordination**

### **PA American Water Charitable Trust Cleanup Program**

- *Cristy Sweeney*-EPCAMR Treasurer, informed us that her parents John and Nancy would be attending the October 17<sup>th</sup> Centralia Cleanup; Volunteers began to contact EPCAMR about joining us for the upcoming cleanup
- *Ann O'Brien*, Professor at Marywood University sent out a call for volunteers for the upcoming South Main Street Illegal Dump site cleanup on abandoned mine lands off Earth Conservancy Drive, Hanover Township, Luzerne County
- Provided *Greg Griffin*, Wilkes-Barre City Blight Committee Volunteer leader with EPCAMR's Litter Crew Ahead Sign and gloves to borrow for the September 19<sup>th</sup> cleanup with the newly formed Make A Difference Coalition, along Solomon Creek and State Route 309 from Hanover Township heading up towards Fairview Township, Luzerne County; EPCAMR created a social media [Facebook Event Page](#) to help spread the word and several volunteers attended
- Coordinated and put out a call for volunteers led by EPCAMR for the 29<sup>th</sup> of September to cleanup up the abandoned mine land site along Sugar Notch Run along S. Preston Drive in Hanover Township, Luzerne County; WVSA donated a dumpster and some supplies; Earth Conservancy donated the front end loader; Luzerne County Rail Authority allowed access to the property to have it cleaned up; PA DCNR Outdoors Crew, Wilkes-Barre City Citizens Blight Committee, OSMRE VISTA, Ashley Borough

Council, Wilkes University students, New Roots Resource Recovery Center, and Hanover Township Police Department all were partners and fully supportive of the effort; Two cleanups had to be conducted due to the amount of trash on the property; [Cleanup Event Page](#)

- Added the PA DCNR Outdoors Crew members to EPCAMR's volunteer database and the following people to the NAACC Lead Observer Aquatic Organism Passage Protocol online training certification database in order for them to begin to study, review, and become certified Lead Observers: *Marie Johns, Louis Febbo, Genevive Babetski, Kerrigan Buck, and Mecca Bradley*

### **OSMRE/AmeriCorps VISTA Stewards Individual Placement Program (SIPP)**

- Forwarded information to *Kyle* on the mandatory OSMRE VISTA Training from October 5-9<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and the monthly newsletter with grant opportunities available nationally
- Talked with *JM Aurednik*-Program Manager for Stewards Individual Placements to give him an update on *Kyle's* work and to clarify the SIPP Placement Policy and Procedures related to telework since Luzerne County is experiencing such a high number of cases of the Corona virus; Reviewed *Kyle's* Quarterly Report, made comments, and signed it
- Provided *Kyle* with a template of our Community Cleanups Signup form and Liability/Photo Waiver to adapt for future cleanups
- Stewards Individual Placement Program and the Corporation for National Community Service (CNCS) awarded *Kyle* up to **\$500** in travel related expenses due to the pandemic
- Suggested that *Kyle* to review the NCAC [Fundamentals](#) Newsletter for potential grant opportunities
  
- Upon interviewing *Katie Van Orden*, EPCAMR offered her a Federal Community Based Work Study Program position through King's College; EPCAMR signed the documentation agreements with King's College and provided them to *Maura Modrovsky* along with EPCAMR's Internship Activity Description document; Worked with *Katie* to prepare an [EPCAMR press release](#) on her internship and Work Study; Signed *Katie* up for the NAACC Aquatic Organism Passage Protocol online training certification and worked out a time schedule for her in the office and in the field; *Katie* filled out all the EPCAMR paperwork once her Work Study ended to become a seasonal part-time intern for the Winter 2020 since following dropping a class that she didn't need to graduate, she fell below a full-time student status and didn't qualify for Work Study Program any longer
  
- Participated in the *Sulfur Run Stream Restoration and Cleanup* in Ashley Borough with *Kyle Argenziano*, OSMRE VISTA volunteer with EPCAMR, Ashley Borough Council members, Ashley Borough Public Works, and St. Leo's Church; Debris removal of woody debris and trash to unblock several culverts along a several hundred-foot stream length to open up the bankfull width of the stream channel to allow stormflows to pass more easily until an anticipated boxed culvert design is completed and constructed

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

- Participated in a PA AMR Conference Planning Committee call; Registrations, Exhibitors, and Sponsors began to come in for the 2020 Virtual PA AMR Conference; Reviewed and signed the Ramada Contract for 2021 and submitted our **\$1000** deposit to *Jennifer West*; EPCAMR started pushing out social media posts on the October 28-29<sup>th</sup> Virtual PA AMR Conference as did members of the PA AMR Conference Committee; Continued to follow up with speakers before the Conference; Continued to fill slots as necessary
- EPCAMR coordinated a Loyalsock Creek AMD Tour with partners on September 2<sup>nd</sup>
- *Julie McMonagle*, Wilkes University Professor requested that the EPCAMR Executive Director participate in a class interview project on career fields in the environment and EPCAMR's work for one of her Environmental Science Courses that she teaches; The Executive Director obliged and spoke to several small teams in the month of September and anticipate another group in October
- EPCAMR Executive Director on September 16<sup>th</sup> conducted a Facebook "Live" [presentation](#) on EPCAMR's work in the region to the [Cumberland Valley Trout Unlimited](#) at the request of *John Leonard*, President of the Chapter since they were very interested in our work and great partnership with TU; The entire "[Live](#)" presentation is on their site
- Coordinated an AMD/AML Watershed Tour in the Southern part of the Wyoming Valley for Professor *Brooke Yeager's* Environmental Science Lab Class of 9 students from Luzerne County Community College on September 22<sup>nd</sup>
- Provided *Heather Hand Madiera*, Sue Hand Imagery, with contact information for a few Anthracite Region enthusiasts to attend *Sue Hand's* planned Art Exhibit at LCCC on the new breaker paintings that she has completed
- Attended the [NEPA Learning Virtual Conference](#) in its 2<sup>nd</sup> year on WHOVA on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> to interact and network with regional partners from around Northeastern PA's non-profits and leadership institutions and companies to discuss our work and to meet other non-profit Executives navigating the pandemic in 2020
- Attended the *PA TU Annual Virtual Meeting* on the 19<sup>th</sup> and provided an update on EPCAMR's work in the region on the Coldwater Conservation Plans that we're currently developing and the culvert assessment work in those watersheds

## **EPCAMR Program Administration**

- Reconciled EPCAMR's Checking Account and PA, Invest Accounts; Paid Health Care Premiums for EPCAMR Staff for August 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; Received the reports from OneSource and amounts to made payments for the EPCAMR Staff IRAs for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2020 to First National Bank; Provided *Denise* with the August 2020 Statement for reconciliations



- Provided *Michael Syzmanski*-State Workers Insurance Fund (SWIF) Auditor, with a completed Independent Contractor Questionnaire (ICQ) from Keystone Reclamation Fuels Management as a part of our 2019-2020 Audit; Forwarded KRFM Worker's Compensation Number, FEIN Number, and two years of their Certificate of Liability Insurance and the Declaration's Page from PA to SWIF
- Submitted EPCAMR's Quickbooks files and Payroll documents from OneSource to our Accountant, Kohanski & Company, for completion and review of our 2019 990s; Picked up our completed 990 Tax Returns and submitted and signed the necessary documents and returned them to *Basil Lynch*, Kohanski & Company, our long-time CPA
- On August 8, the President of the United States issued a directive to the Secretary of the Treasury to defer, withholding, deposit and payment of certain employee Social Security payroll tax obligations. In turn, the Secretary of the Treasury has announced a postponement of eligible taxes that would have been withheld during the period from Sept 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020, to the period beginning January 1, 2021 and ending on April 30, 2021; This is a deferral of employee tax; Unless Congress approves forgiveness of these taxes, repayment would be required for all eligible deferred taxes in the first four months of 2021; EPCAMR decided not to utilize the deferral which would have presented each of the employees with a large tax bill at the beginning of the year
- EPCAMR was informed that the Squeaky Rail Diner in Enola, PA had to pull one of the clothing dumpsters that took in donations from their property due to the pandemic; EPCAMR was informed by *Lynn Whitten*-Community Coordinator for Community Aid; Since the pandemic, basically, no external bins are being placed, but Community Aid is donating to non-profits **\$.06/lb** when clothing is taken to one of their donation centers through a virtual partnership
- Provided *Geoff Shaw*, Earth Conservancy with the names of all Staff that will need key fobs to get into the Office now with the new security measures in place since COVID-19
- Verified and updated our GoDaddy domain accounts
- Completed the September 2020 Board Report