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Cranesnest Trail Project Receives \$711,100 Grant for Safety Improvements and Expansion

Dickenson County, Va.- Expanding a trail network and reclaiming abandoned mine land features that are a hazard to the public will be the results of a grant awarded to Dickenson County from the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME). The county received \$711,100 from the Abandoned Mine Lands Pilot Program.

The money will be used to expand the Cranesnest multiuse recreational trail. Safety improvements are the top priority and are important to keeping this a tourist stop for years to come. The grant will pay for the closure of nine historic underground coal mine portals along the trail's path. A bridge will also be constructed to connect the current trail to the new 1,500 foot section that will be built this year. This will also connect the trail to the Cranesnest Campground.

"Trail systems have proved to be an asset to local economies," said Dickenson County Board of Supervisors member Ron Peters. "This project will get us started toward an end goal that could be the very reason people decide to come and play outside in Dickenson County. We are also happy to provide a place where our local residents can enjoy the scenery of our beautiful area."

"This project is a win-win for our agency and the county," said DMME Deputy Director Butch Lambert. "Closing those nine portals will vastly improve safety around the trail and the county gets to see the benefit of an area that could become a destination and boost their local economy."

The Cranesnest trail proposal was one of 15 submitted to the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME). The agency reviewed proposals for eligibility and then took them before an advisory council made up of people involved in local economic development. The council chose six projects to go to the Office of Surface Mining (OSM) for approval.

“In addition to extending the Cranesnest Trail, this investment will enhance the user experience and provide additional opportunities for residents and visitors seeking outdoor recreation and adventure,” said Delegate Todd Pillion. “We are blessed with beautiful places like Dickenson County where these federal dollars will support efforts to expand economic opportunity and improve quality of life.”

The Cranesnest Trail follows the Cranes Nest River that leads to the John W. Flanagan Reservoir. The trailhead is in the town of Clintwood and another at the reservoir. Once completed, it is planned the trail will be 26 miles.

The Pilot Program originated in a federal omnibus bill in 2017. DMME will receive another \$10 million this year for more economic development projects on abandoned mine lands. The agency is accepting proposals through October 31st.

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