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# COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy Receives Second \$10 Million Grant to Improve Local Economy and Environment**

**Big Stone Gap, Va.-** Community improvements will continue another year thanks to a \$10 million Power Plus Pilot Program grant given to the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME). The money will fund projects that improve the economy of Virginia's coalfield region and the environment through reclamation of abandoned mine lands.

This is the second Power Plus grant of \$10 million in which DMME is responsible for working with local developers and leaders in finding projects that create a positive and economic community improvement. The agency will begin receiving proposals for projects near the end of May. Instructions on submitting those proposals will be available via the DMME [website](#) at that time.

“We wanted to get the word out as soon as possible about the grant to encourage people to really get innovative when submitting proposals,” said DMME Deputy Director Butch Lambert. “DMME is a member of the coalfield community too and we want to see projects that help us thrive as a region. This area is beloved by its people and we want those looking for places to invest to realize the endless opportunities.”

Anyone can submit a proposal but it must meet the Office of Surface Mining's [guidelines](#). The ultimate goal for the funding is to return legacy coal sites to productive uses so each proposal must include the reclamation of an abandoned mine land site. DMME houses an inventory and location of all identified abandoned mine lands on its [website](#). Those submitting projects are also encouraged to find matching or additional funds from other economic development agencies. Projects should also include development that is measurable.

“I think everyone involved wants to see results,” added Lambert. “We need to make the very most of this \$10 million and put it toward ideas that are new, creative and will hopefully bring us more than double the return on the investment.”

DMME’s Abandoned Mine Land program was created after the Surface Mining and Control Act passed in 1977, which put more focus on improving the environment during and after coal mining. The program reclaims priority sites that were mined before 1977 and that may be dangerous to the public and environment. The agency received \$5.8 million for priority projects this year. The Pilot funding can be used on non-priority historic mining sites.

DMME received 15 project proposals in 2017. Six were sent to the Office of Surface Mining for approval to be funded. Projects receiving grant money will be announced once the approval process is complete.

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