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GEOLOGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES
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COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

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Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy Part of Historic Signing of Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Big Stone Gap, Va. – The nation’s top environmental regulatory authority is joining forces with a non-profit to ensure states’ oil and gas programs are top notch. The Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) was at the table when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the State Review of Oil and Natural Gas Environmental Regulations (STRONGER) agreed to find opportunities to work together to improve environmental protections and economic outcomes. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed on November 29, 2018.

DMME’s Deputy Director, Butch Lambert, serves as chairman on STRONGER’s Board of Directors. “Having EPA collaboration when reviewing states’ natural gas programs will be instrumental in not only ensuring the best for the environment but will also result in direct assistance for programs as they work to improve compliance,” said Lambert. “STRONGER’s goal is to always improve our oil and gas programs across this nation and this is a significant step in continuing that mission.”

STRONGER is a non-profit, multi-stakeholder and educational organization. It reviewed Virginia’s natural gas program in 2004 and did a follow-up review in 2016. The Commonwealth responded to recommendations in 2017, which resulted in an improved program for the environment and the economy of southwest Virginia.

Areas of collaboration between STRONGER and the EPA could include stakeholder engagement, identifying up and coming issues that could affect state and tribe programs or developing tools to help ensure regulations are followed. The MOU is also designed to improve communication on responsible production of oil and natural gas.

