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City of Norton Receives \$47,420 for Enhancements at Country Cabin II and Development of Abandoned Mine Land Site

Norton, Va.- A popular tourist site in Norton, Virginia will see major improvements due to a \$47,420 Pilot Program Grant. The money will be used to make the popular music venue, Country Cabin II, a year-round facility. The Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) received the \$10 million from the U.S. Department of Treasury to help identify abandoned mine land sites that could be reclaimed or developed to boost the economy of the southwest region of the Commonwealth.

“The Country Cabin II is a showcase for Southwest Virginia’s rich musical heritage as part of the Crooked Road. Funding from the Abandoned Mine Land Pilot program will make it an even greater draw,” **said Congressman Morgan Griffith (R-VA)**. “By improving the site’s capacity to hold events year-round, this grant will enhance the visitor experience at Country Cabin II and expand economic benefits for the City of Norton and Wise County.”

Over 6,000 people from different states and countries visit the Country Cabin II to hear Appalachian music every year. It also serves as host to several regional and private events. This grant will pay for equipment and construction needed to ensure the venue can continue events through colder weather months.

In 2005, DMME removed a dangerous highwall and landslide caused by historic mining at the site. The agency spent \$127,000 to ensure the safety and environmental protection of the land.

“This site is a great example of how mined land can be reclaimed and developed to have a positive impact on the economy of southwest Virginia,” **said DMME Deputy Director Butch Lambert**. “The Country Cabin has a long and rich history in the region and we are glad our agency can be involved in allowing continued expansion on the site it was originally built on in the late 1930’s.”

The grant will pay for improvements to an outdoor stage area. Doors, insulation and paneling for the interior, ceiling and floor will be installed to close in that area to ensure a comfortable venue in rainy or colder weather.

“Appalachian Traditions, Inc. and Country Cabin are proud to accept the grant which will make it possible for us to add to our existing facility by installing doors, inside insulation and paneling on the walls and to seal the concrete floor,” **said Appalachian Traditions, Inc. President Bill Jones.** “We hope to build a good relationship with DMME and continue our good relationship with Wise County and the City of Norton, both of whom have given us much needed assistance for many years.”

The Country Cabin II Project was one of 18 proposals 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 ten projects to go to the Office of Surface Mining (OSM) for approval.

The Pilot Program originated in a federal omnibus bill in 2017. DMME has received a total of \$20 million for the projects over the last two years. The agency is expected to receive an additional \$10 million for economic development projects to be selected in 2020.

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