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# COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Russell County Receives \$269,000 for Dante Community Redevelopment Project and Reclamation of Abandoned Mine Lands**

**Russell Co., Va.** - A former coal camp is hoping to increase visitors by constructing a trail system using a Pilot Program grant for \$269,000. The grant will fund a series of ATV, biking and walking trails and reclaim two mine portals left from coal mining that occurred before 1977 in the Dante community of Russell County. The Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) received the \$10 million for the Pilot Program grants from the U.S. Department of Treasury to help identify abandoned mine land sites that could be reclaimed to boost the economy of the southwest region of the Commonwealth.

“The AML Pilot program can offer communities seeking new economic opportunity and diversification an important helping hand. By supporting the development of trail networks and addressing abandoned mine portals, this grant will advance Dante’s redevelopment plans,” said **Congressman Morgan Griffith (R-VA)**. “It will enhance the ability of natives and tourists alike to explore Southwest Virginia’s natural beauty and boundless recreational opportunities.”

The trails are part of a larger plan to increase the number of tourists that visit Dante every year. The hope is to also attract visitors through history of coal mining, railroads and even coalfield baseball in addition to the terrain that provides a unique outdoor experience.

“There is so much to see and learn about the history of coal mining in Dante,” said **DMME Deputy Director Butch Lambert**. “We hope adding these trails in and around the community will peak the interest of those out for a walk or ride to come on into town and learn more. We are very pleased to also see some adjacent portals closed—which adds an important public safety component to this project.”

"Because of the AML Pilot Program dollars awarded to us through DMME, the Arty Lee property will once again be developable property and the County will not have a blighted and potentially

dangerous property to insure,” said **Russell County Board of Supervisors Member Lou Wallace**. “I’m grateful to all those who chose our project and to the community volunteers who have stepped up to make a difference.”

The Dante Community Development 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 received an additional \$10 million for economic development projects to be selected in 2020. [Applications](#) are due to the agency by October 31, 2019.

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