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Pocahontas Receives \$379,178 for Exhibition Mine Improvements and Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization

Tazewell County, Va. - The goal was to improve the economy of Virginia's coalfields and a second project in Pocahontas will do just that. The town was awarded a grant of \$379,178 from the Abandoned Mine Lands Economic Revitalization Program (AMLER). The program is managed by the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) and overseen by the federal Office of Surface Mining and Reclamation Enforcement (OSMRE). This is the second grant the town received for improvements to the Pocahontas Exhibition Mine—the only one of its kind in Virginia.

“The Pocahontas Exhibition Mine is a unique Southwest Virginia treasure that showcases our mining heritage. This latest federal AML Pilot Project grant will advance upgrades to the property, including the addition of a tram stop to increase the site's accessibility,” said **Congressman Morgan Griffith**. “As a result, the Pocahontas Exhibition Mine will become even more appealing to sightseers and a greater asset to the local economy. Continued support for the project is a boon to the town of Pocahontas and the region's wider tourism industry.”

This grant funded Phase II of work underway at the mine. Visitors can now experience the Exhibition Mine as many did in its early days through a riding tour. A tram stop was created and visitors can participate in a guided tour by taking the tram underground. Space neighboring the museum was renovated and turned into a restaurant. It is available for lease.

Pocahontas received \$1.5 million from the 2017 Abandoned Mine Land Pilot Program. Phase I included safety improvements to the mine itself with additional roof support and a paved walkway.

“What a perfect example of how a former mine site can boost a local economy, which is exactly what DMME's Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization Program is designed to do,” said

DMME Abandoned Mine Lands Project Manager Lesa Baker. “This will be a complete experience for those coming to Pocahontas to learn about an important piece of Virginia’s history.”

The town expects to see a 50-percent increase in ticket sales due to the improvements. Pocahontas is also an access location for ATV riders looking to hit the Spearhead or Hatfield-McCoy off road trail systems. Improvements in this site could also increase the number of riders visiting the town.

“We have worked hard to make this town a destination,” said **Pocahontas Mayor Benjamin Gibson.** “It is amazing to see plans come to fruition and we are grateful for the helping hand of agencies like DMME that can assist us in reaching our goals to revitalize this coalfield community.”

“I am proud to call Pocahontas my hometown and so proud of the opportunities available now and in the near future, not only for our citizens, but also for our many visitors,” said **Tazewell County Board Northern District Supervisor Maggie Asbury.** “It will be good to see a crowd in this town to take in this piece of Tazewell County history we’ve worked diligently to preserve.”

Pocahontas’s proposal was one of was one of 19 proposals submitted to the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) for the 2018 grant. 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 Pocahontas mine was the first in southwest Virginia. Coal mined there served the U.S. Navy through two World Wars. It employed hundreds of citizens and immigrants throughout the time it was an active operation.

More on the Pocahontas Exhibition Mine can be found in this [video](#).

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