



# Project Update

# Innovative Mine Reclamation

## Uniting Economic Development and Reclamation in Southwest Va.

### The Project

Appalachian Voices is partnering with Downstream Strategies and Coal Mining Engineering Services to perform an analysis of Abandoned Mine Land sites (AML) in far Southwest Virginia for economic development potential. The goal is to identify specific AML sites eligible for RECLAIM Act or other federal funding for remediation and development that can provide an economic benefit to the surrounding community.

We're looking forward and thinking outside the box. Imagine a solar farm on a reclaimed mine site powering a high-tech data center. Think of permaculture food production systems that have a closed waste loop, restoring the land as it produces organic food. Or imagine a town park replacing a dilapidated coal processing facility, long since abandoned.

### The Story So Far

As of May 2016, the team has narrowed the total number of AML sites from 500 down to the top 15-20 sites that have the most potential for positive economic development. The winnowing process has involved crunching a fair bit of data, alongside a concerted effort to engage people and organizations within the region that have a vested interest in economic development or, even better, plans in place. Our analysis will incorporate

development plans already in the works by local governments, planning districts, and other stakeholders.

To that end, Coal Mining Engineering Services has visited over a dozen communities, including Norton, Appalachia, Clintwood, Haysi, Grundy, Coeburn, and Pocahontas to learn about a number of visions and planned projects. Not surprisingly, these communities are actively pursuing a number of goals. The city of Norton, for example, has extensively studied two large areas within its boundaries (see next page), and many communities are pursuing similar goals. To date, our efforts have resulted in a preliminary (and subject to change) catalog of sites across Southwest Virginia.

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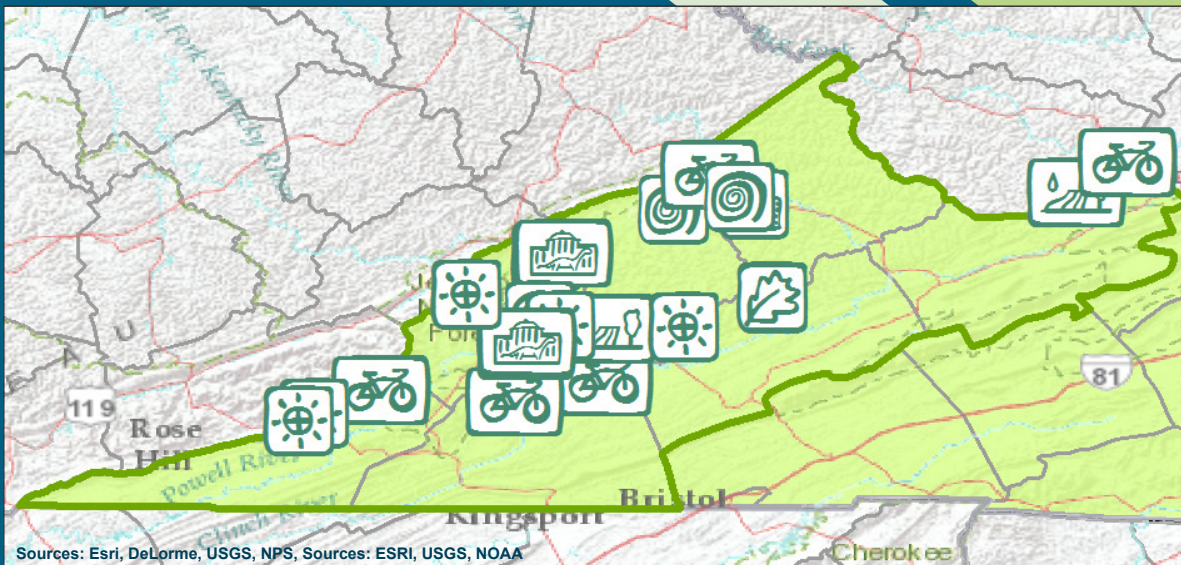
### Goals

- Demonstrate the need for and potential positive impact of the RECLAIM Act in the Southwest Virginia coalfields as the proposed legislation moves through Congress.
- Utilize results to accelerate Virginia's deployment of RECLAIM and other funds.
- Promote AML projects that are forward thinking and adaptive to the changing economic realities in far Southwest Virginia.

### Approach

The approach developed by the partners is simple: Review Virginia's abandoned mine lands for their potential as useful sites and scrutinize

them as they relate to various existing resources (community interest and capacity, and proximity to population centers, transportation, utilities infrastructure, markets, etc.) in order to locate the most promising locations. Those sites will be examined individually and assessed for their suitability for a variety of economic activities such as recreation and parks, renewable energy production, agroforestry, agriculture, and business or industrial park development. Ultimately, we will present grounded development scenarios for each site alongside overviews of the potential economic impact of these activities.



### Evaluation Sites

- Agriculture
- Agroforestry
- Commercial
- Energy
- Industrial
- Mixed
- Recreation



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## Background

Downstream Strategies has a long history of economic assessment and development projects in the coalfield region of West Virginia and Coal Mining Engineering Services offers invaluable “boots on the ground” experience within far Southwest Virginia as well as expert knowledge of typical AML issues. Together with the leadership and capacity building resources of Appalachian Voices, these three entities are combing the hills for economic development opportunities that will help Southwest Virginia move confidently into the next phase of the global economy.

**We envision a future for Southwest Virginia where economic diversification is paired with responsible and forward-thinking remediation of abandoned mine lands.** The team is inspired by other regional efforts (see sidebar “Project Examples”), and believes great possibility exists in these sites. Despite oft-quoted grim statistics about the region, there are numerous, diverse bright spots on the map of redevelopment, from commercial and industrial projects to agriculture and recreation.

With federal funding on the horizon, and local interest reaching a boiling point, now is the time to develop a strong, creative vision for the economic future of the region. We believe that this project — and the lasting connections that are being built — will strongly contribute to the future of Southwest Virginia.

## Project Examples

### *The Powell River Project*

The Powell River Project is a large research program managed by Virginia's Cooperative Extension office, along with numerous other partners. The project has produced a large body of work related to best practices for mine land restoration with a focus on forestry or agriculture markets. Of particular interest is the restoration of post-mine lands to support grazing — an industry of great local importance to far Southwest Virginia.

### *Refresh Appalachia*

Refresh Appalachia is a recent endeavor from the Coalfield Development Corporation which seeks to combine the workforce development mission of CDCo with commercial agricultural production on abandoned mine lands. Of particular interest are intensive growing practices for contract growing and season extension. Mine sites are particularly conducive to growing season extension practices such as greenhouses and high tunnels due to site characteristics.

These projects have devoted significant resources to the pursuit of reclamation practices paired with sustainable forestry and agriculture. These and similar efforts are generating interest and gaining momentum in the communities, and we believe that we can identify sites and stakeholders for similar endeavors in Southwest Virginia.

## Community Planning



### *Norton River Walk*

The Norton River Walk is an ongoing project with a final vision of a park and greenway trail to be built around and through an abandoned coal processing facility along the Guest River within the city limits. Norton has invested heavily in recent years in the growing fields of eco-tourism and outdoor recreation, seeking to enhance the city for residents and visitors alike.

## What's Next

The final report will be released in early fall 2016 and will provide a general analysis of the 15 best sites identified through the study on clean-up cost estimates and economic impact for each site. The project team is actively working now on phase 2 — positioning the best handful of sites to move on to a detailed design phase that progresses the sites towards a shovel-ready status, ready for RECLAIM Act or other funding sources. We'll work with partners in the region to leverage additional resources to get closer to making the most promising projects a reality.

## Innovative Mine Reclamation in Southwest Virginia

### Project Update

#### *Prospective Abandoned Mine Land Sites Suitable for Economic Development*

<b>Prospective Site Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>AML/Adjacent to AML</b>	<b>Category</b>
Norton Riverside Trail	Norton	AML VA000067	Recreation
Norton Cloverleaf	Norton	AML VA000067	Industrial
Lonesome Pine Airport	Wise County	VA00065	Residential
Lonesome Pine Airport	Wise County	VA00065	Industrial/Solar
Devil's Fork	Scott County	VA000281	Recreation
Glamorgan	Wise County	VA000418	Agri-forestry/Industrial/Residential
Red Onion Industrial	Dickenson County	Adjacent to VA000041	Industrial
Dante	Russell County	VA000094	Windmill
Bull Creek	Buchanan County	Adjacent to VA 000292	Recreation
Poplar Gap	Buchanan County	Adjacent to AML	Commercial/Industrial/Recreation
Buchanan County Airport	Buchanan County	VA000668	Commercial
Big A Mountain	Russell County	Adjacent to AML	Agri-forestry
Puckett's Creek	Lee County	VA000258	Agri-forestry/solar
Route 606	Lee County	VA000553	Solar/Windmill
Stone Mt. Trail	Lee County	VA000263	Recreation
Spearhead Trails	Tazewell County	VA000686	Recreation/Industrial/Residential
Meade Fork-Pound	Wise County	VA000800	Industrial
Tom's Creek	Wise County	VA000070	Aquaculture
Haysi-Russell Fork	Dickenson County	VA000676	Recreation/Commercial
Dungannon-Clinch River	Scott County	Adj. to VA000028/000697	Recreation
Abbs Valley	Tazewell County	VA000200	Hydro/Aquaculture/Agri-forestry

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