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COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

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Virginia Energy Closed Underground Mine Openings Created by Legacy Coal Mining

Big Stone Gap, Va. –The Virginia Department of Energy (Virginia Energy) closed four mine portals just outside of the town limits of Coeburn and very close to several homes. Mine portals are openings created by underground coal mining. Virginia Energy oversees the AML program that develops projects to reclaim issues caused by coal mining before 1977.

Open mine portals are dangerous to the public as often they house dangerous gases. Residents are reminded to stay out of such abandoned mine land features as there are other possible hazards that could be in these openings.

“Due to the proximity to town and the evidence of ATV traffic in this area, blocking these portals was a priority,” said **Abandoned Mine Land Manager Lesa Baker**. “We can’t stress enough the dangers of entering such openings and we want to make sure there is no chance of that in the future.”

An AML grant of \$38,410 paid for the installation of wet seals on the portals. Underground mine works often fill up with water and this will prevent any excessive flow or a blowout. C&S Construction and Excavating, Inc. was hired to complete the project. In addition to the seals, the contractor ensured erosion controls and planted grass and trees at the construction area after the work was completed. One portal was home to some bats so a bat friendly closure was used there.

Virginia Energy’s Abandoned Mine Land program was established after the passing of the Surface Mine Control and Reclamation Act in 1977. The agency manages a federal grant to reclaim issues caused by historic mining. It is funded by the Office of Surface Mining and Reclamation Enforcement (OSMRE).

The Abandoned Mine Land program falls under the Mined Land Repurposing program within Virginia Energy. If you should have an issue with an abandoned mine land please call 276-523-8100 or email vaenergy@energy.virginia.gov.

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