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Dante Community Redevelopment Project Completed with New Multi-Use Trails

The project received \$269,000 in Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization funding for construction and to reclaim features left by historic coal mining.

Russell Co., Va. – The ribbon was cut this morning in a former coal camp hoping to see an increase in visitors now that their community redevelopment project is complete. With the help of an Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization (AMLER) grant of \$269,000, Russell County was able to construct a series of ATV, biking and walking trails all accessible in Dante. The Virginia Department of Energy (Virginia Energy) oversees the AMLER program which encourages economic development on land that was mined for coal before 1977. This project also led to the reclamation of reclaim two mine portals left behind from mining that occurred in the communities in the 1940's.

“The AMLER funds were put to good use building a network of trails throughout the town of Dante, past old homes, a company store and other landmarks so visitors can see and learn more about the historical coal camp in person,” **said Congressman Morgan Griffith.**

“Today we celebrate the vision that Russell County and this community had when they applied for the AMLER funding. The results will provide a needed economic boost to Dante through tourism,” **said Virginia Energy Director Glenn Davis.** “We also are pleased to have the added benefit of improving safety in this community by getting old mine portals reclaimed through this process.”

“The Dante trails and campground project is a wonderful example of a community recognizing the value of its natural assets, then connecting that vision with partners and

grant programs to make it a reality”, **said Brad Kreps, Director of the Clinch Valley Program for The Nature Conservancy.** “These new trails located in The Nature Conservancy’s Cumberland Forest will improve public access to nature and provide a connection between Dante and St. Paul as both communities embrace outdoor recreation as part of their future.”

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.

“In all the community work I’ve ever been associated with, the Dante Project has been the most challenging, and rewarding,” said **Russell County Board of Supervisors Chairwoman Lou Wallace.** “Dante will forever be the place that led the way in economic development 100 years ago, and now Dante is taking the lead in a new economy.”

The AMLER program originated in a federal omnibus bill in 2017. Virginia has received funding for the program annually since that year. The AMLER program is administered by the federal Office of Surface Mining and Reclamation Enforcement (OSMRE).

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