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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Virginia Energy Monitoring Coal Refuse Fire in Chesterfield *Coal Refuse Left from Mining That Occurred in the late 1870's*

Chesterfield, Va. – The Virginia Department of Energy (Virginia Energy) is monitoring a coal refuse pile that is burning in the Winterpock community of Chesterfield County. The fire was first reported on March 8th. The entire pile is about 100 by 30 feet. The fire is contained to a few spots within the pile. It is in a remote and wooded area and does not pose a risk to any structure. The public should not approach the refuse pile.

The coal refuse is a result of mining that occurred in the region by Bright Hope Coal Company that was operational in 1877. This specific site was the Beaver Slope Mine. At the time, technology was not available to better separate coal from rock during the mining process. Environmental regulations were also not in place to properly reclaim this material so the spoil that resulted from mining was often just left in piles.

While this is a very uncommon occurrence in Virginia, refuse or spoil pile fires can happen, and several factors have to be considered in finding the solution for extinguishing the fire. Virginia Energy's Abandoned Mine Land team is working with our federal partners at the Office of Surface Mining and Reclamation Enforcement (OSMRE) to gather information and other technical expertise to develop the engineering plan and get a crew to the site next week to begin work. In the meantime, Chesterfield County's fire department is assisting the agency in monitoring the site.

[The Richmond coal basin was an active mining community in the 1700's and 1800's.](#) Several features from that mining still remain in the area. Virginia Energy asks that if you see something you think is associated with historic coal mining to [please contact our agency.](#) We also URGE the public to please stay out of the areas because they can [pose a danger.](#)

[Virginia Energy Abandoned Mine Land program](#) was created in 1981 and is federally funded to reclaim issues left behind by coal mining that occurred before 1977. Funding has been limited in the past meaning only the highest priority problems were able to be reclaimed. The projects were a safety threat to residents or had a significant negative environmental impact. The federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will provide Virginia Energy with a substantial increase in funding to do more projects, such as removing coal refuse piles, beginning this spring.