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Breaks Interstate Park Receives \$300,000 for Waterpark Expansion

Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization Funding Contributing Toward a New Swimming Pool

Breaks, Va. – Breaks Interstate Park will have a new attraction for visitors making their way to the Grand Canyon of the South, a new swimming pool. The Breaks Interstate Park Commission received \$300,000 from the Virginia Department of Energy’s (Virginia Energy) Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization (AMLER) grant to help cover the costs of this new addition. AMLER is a federally funded program and is administered by Virginia Energy.

“This AMLER grant for \$300,000 will bring a welcome addition to Breaks Interstate Park,” **said U.S. Representative Morgan Griffith.** “The park showcases Southwest Virginia’s beauty, and a new swimming pool will continue to drive interest in visiting the area and exploring some of our region’s most scenic sites.”

“This AMLER project is a great tool to not only increase visitors but to add more seasonal job opportunities at the park,” **said Virginia Energy Director Glenn Davis.** “This agency was also glad to use \$100,000 from our traditional Abandoned Mine Land fund to close three open mine portals within the park and eliminate possible safety issues for visitors.”

Adding the pool to the existing waterpark is expected to increase visitors. Breaks Interstate Park already has over 12,000 people visit the waterpark each season. It will also increase revenue by nearly \$100,000 annually and create five to seven new seasonal jobs.

“Opening this pool will accomplish strategic goals and provide a new experience that has been requested by our guests for some time,” **said Breaks Interstate Park**

Superintendent Austin Bradley. “We are grateful that our vision will become a reality thanks to the AMLER program and other generous funding partners.”

Breaks Interstate Park is a major economic driver for Buchanan and Dickenson counties in Virginia and for Pike County in Kentucky. With an annual revenue of over \$3 million, the unique attraction has 10 full time employs and provides 85 seasonal jobs for area high school and college students. The pool is scheduled to open Memorial Day weekend.

The AMLER program originated in a federal omnibus bill in 2017, Virginia Energy has received \$10 million annually for economic development on abandoned mine lands The program is administered by the Office of Surface Mining and Reclamation Enforcement. The grants are managed by Virginia Energy’s Abandoned Mine Land (AML) program.

[Virginia Energy’s AML 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.