



# COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

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## Virginia Coalfield Coalition Receives \$1 Million for the Construction of Three Wireless Network Towers Along Route 460

**Buchanan County, Va.** – “Can you hear me now?” will soon be a question travelers along Route 460 in Buchanan County no longer have to ask. The Virginia Coalfield Coalition (VCC) received a grant of \$1,000,000 from the Virginia Department of Energy’s (Virginia Energy) Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization (AMLER) grant program to increase wireless network access along 20 miles of the Route 460 corridor.

“This \$1,000,000 AMLER grant is directed towards the creation of three wireless network towers at the Keen Mountain, Short Hill and Boyd Branch sites,” **said U.S. Representative Morgan Griffith**. “These new towers along Route 460 will help Buchanan County attract potential businesses, enhance mobile communication and expand broadband access for residents.”

“In 2024, the ability to communicate is crucial not only for emergency response but also as an important piece in growing the economy,” **said Virginia Energy Director Glenn Davis**. “We are excited to see this funding created as a result of historic coal mining benefit residents and visitors to this county that has its own rich coal history.”

The new towers will serve two major industrial parks, at least 25 businesses, approximately 131 households and enable use of various mobile technology. The AMLER funds will be used to support construction of the three towers at the Keen Mountain, Short Hill and Boyd Branch sites. This piece is part of a larger project that will result in a total of six towers.

Additional funding supporting the overall project includes \$1 million from the Appalachian Regional Commission, \$250,000 from the Thompson Charitable Foundation and \$190,365 from the Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority (VCEDA).

“Since 2011, The Virginia Coalfield Coalition has been working to build the infrastructure and find funding partners to improve communication across our coalfield counties,” **said VCC Co-Executive Director Scotty Wampler**. “This project enhances business recruiting efforts for our two major industrial parks in Buchanan and Tazewell counties.”

“These new cell phone towers mark a pivotal moment for the Route 460 Corridor and the VCC service region as a whole,” **said Joe Fawbush, Chairman, Virginia Coalfield Coalition**. “We recognize the importance of reliable connectivity in today's digital age, and these towers represent the VCC’s dedication to ensuring that all residents have equal access to the opportunities afforded by modern technology.”

The VCC entered into a land agreement with CNX Gas when siting the new towers.

“CNX Resources is pleased to be a part of helping to advance cellular communication services along the Rt. 460 corridor by providing three parcels of land rent-free to the Virginia Coalfield Coalition for the construction location of three cell towers,” **said CNX Resources Vice President Brian Green**. “We know how important cell service is to our community and it is equally important to us and our contractors in the field. The addition of the new cell towers is welcomed, and we are glad to have played a part in making it possible through the land agreements we entered into with the VCC.”

“The impact of providing wireless network to this region is far reaching,” **said VCC Board Member and Buchanan County representative Roger Rife**. “This project will bolster efforts to grow our economy improve our communities and add jobs.”

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.