



DIVISIONS

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MINED LAND RECLAMATION  
ADMINISTRATION

# COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Worst Mine Related Impact to Clinch to be Removed in Russell County, Virginia**

### *Hurricane Fork Gob Pile To Be Removed And Burned At Nearby Power Plant*

**Russell County, Va.-** The Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) is helping to rid southwest Virginia of the single, worst mine related impact to water quality in the Clinch River. DMME will use \$500,000 of abandoned mine land funds to remove a gob pile in Hurricane Fork. Gob piles are piles of waste made up of a small amount of coal mixed with shale from coal mining operations and often seen as waste by operators.

The pile was once considered coal waste and is estimated to hold 1.5 million tons of material. It is located on State Route 621; 1.8 north of South Clinchfield in Russell County.

Abingdon, Virginia based GOBCO, LLC, will remove the refuse pile which covers twelve acres. The material will be taken to Dominion's Virginia City Hybrid Energy Center where it will be burned for electricity production.

"This is an abandoned mine land problem we've been working to remove for some time. Because of the cooperation of all agencies and groups and the opportunities for proper disposal now available nearby in Virginia City, we are making it happen. The effects of removing this environmental hazard are extremely beneficial to a large portion of southwest Virginia", said DMME's Deputy Director, Butch Lambert.

DMME has been working to remove the hazard since 1987 and recently received approval from the Office of Surface Mining to move ahead with the project. This project is part of a larger effort to get the entire Clinch watershed healthy again.

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The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) identified impaired streams due to the impact of mining before reclamation laws were established in 1977. DMME assists several agencies in making a plan to restore those watersheds in part by setting total maximum daily loads (TMDL), or the maximum amount of sediments and other pollutants that can be discharged into a stream without impairing it further. DEQ had placed Dumps Creek on the state's impaired stream list. Following approval of the TMDL, DMME assisted DEQ in developing a plan for the stream to improve water quality. For Hurricane Fork and the receiving stream, Dumps Creek, one of the steps to the improvement was reclaiming this abandoned mine land feature.

“This is the prime example of how a plan comes together. Our plan for the Clinch watershed is making that river and surrounding streams healthy once again. These are not cheap or easy projects but they are critical to our environment and DMME will continue to make the efforts until there are no abandoned mine land problems left in Virginia” said Abandoned Mine Land Projects Coordinator, Richard Davis.

Work is underway and is expected to take four years to complete. The total costs are expected to be \$8 million.

Since 1982, the Abandoned Mine Land program of DMME has been funding projects to clean up hazards left behind by mining that occurred before reclamation laws were passed. The program is funded through a reclamation fee coal companies pay on each ton of coal produced.

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