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# COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Water Quality Improvement Grant to help Stabilize Dangerous Landslide in Buchanan County caused by Historic Coal Mining**

**Buchanan County, Va.-** A \$400,000 grant from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) will help the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) stabilize a dangerous landslide caused by surface mining that occurred in the Elkins Branch area of Buchanan County before 1977. The landslide is posing a potential danger to the health and safety of those residents in Elkins Branch and could damage Slate Creek due to the amount of sediment added from the slide.

“Unfortunately money for abandoned mine land projects has declined and we needed to find a way to eliminate this landslide fast,” said Deputy Director Butch Lambert. “Our Abandoned Mine Land (AML) group sought out the resources to help fund the \$2 million project and are able to begin work in Buchanan County because of this DEQ grant. This is one of the largest projects DMME has taken on in the 38 years of our AML program.”

Work will begin this summer removing the material and stabilizing the hillside. The slide area covers about 15 acres. Crews have been on standby since DMME was notified of the slide to remove any material that may move into Elkins Branch and eventually run into Slate Creek. DMME estimates 200,000 cubic yards of material will need to be removed after erosion and sediment controls are put in place. Native brush and trees will be planted and a safety fence installed.

DMME engineers designed a plan to stabilize the slide and the agency assessed the landslide to be able to prepare for potential impact to homes and businesses below the site.

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DMME's Abandoned Mine Land Program was established to correct pre-Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) coal mine related problems adversely impacting public health, safety, general welfare, and the environment. SMCRA enhanced requirements for reclamation and environmental protection for surface coal mining.

Since DMME's AML program began 38 years ago, \$131 million dollars has been spent reclaiming over 22,741 acres of abandoned mines. Landslides were stabilized on 460 of those acres.

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