FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 31, 2021
Tarah Kesterson
(276) 356-3405
tarah.kesterson@dmme.virginia.gov

Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy Responds to Emergency at Former Surface Coal Mine

Sediment from Site Erosion Slowing Traffic on State Route 632

Russell County— The Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy is working to remedy what the agency has deemed an emergency at the former Harold Keen Coal Company mine in the Dye area of Russell County. Severe erosion has occurred due to heavy rain and spread to State Route 632. The debris was several feet deep.

DMME will spend $19,500 from the bond forfeiture fund to stabilize the site. The agency’s contractor, Cleco Corporation, began work today to redirect the water flowing from the mine site and causing the severe erosion into a sediment pond. Contractors will build better ditching, regrade the mine access road and build water bars, or diagonal speedbumps, to direct water flow. Work is expected be completed within 24 hours.

“Coal mines should never create offsite hazards such as this issue which caused public safety concerns on State Route 632,” said DMME Director of Coal Programs Marshall Moore. “Having the ability to declare such events as emergencies allows us to act fast to ensure there is minimal impact to our surrounding communities.”

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has assisted in ensuring commuter safety by keeping the road clear of the debris and removing it from the site.

The Harold Keen Coal Company permit was issued in 2008. DMME forfeited the bond in October 2020. Bond forfeitures are a result of a company not meeting environmental regulations. Once a bond is forfeited, DMME receives the responsibility to properly reclaim the site using the bond the company was required to place before receiving a permit. DMME has not been able to complete reclamation because the agency is unable to collect the bond, at this time, due to court proceedings.