

Mather area moving forward with mine reclamation

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A Sign of Improvement



Chelsea Dicks Yellow Jacket

The black mounds contrast oddly with the hills of green foliage.

A dark monster, still on fire, comes out of the ground for hundreds of feet only to disappear behind the trees and houses making it seem normal. Many do not even notice them, those out-of-place remnants of the past.

The old fences surrounding the 70-acre area are old, falling apart but still have a couple of faded orange
NO TRESSPASSING
signs hanging by a nail.

Many local people can attest to exploring past those fences, standing on top of the black monster, taking a few steps and watching the figure of the mounds change beneath them as pieces fall off the side and tumble over themselves onto the ground.

They have been there since the early 1900's, looming over the town of Mather as a reminder of a time that has come and gone.

A reminder of when Mather was headquarters for the booming coal industry.

A reminder of why the small town was created in the first place.

A reminder of the explosion that changed many locals' lives and the coal industry forever.

Even though the mine closed in 1964, the refuse coal piles continue to be.

But organizations have come together to reclaim the abandoned mine and try to create an area that is safe and once again enjoyable for the people of the community.

With this new year the departments of Environmental Protection and Conservation and Natural Resources, Department of Environmental Protection, and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, DCNR, have started working on the almost \$1.6 million project.

The purpose of the project is to create a safe and healthy area within the old Mather Mine and also the closely proximate, Ryerson Station State Park where currently neither of these attributes exist according to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection contract for the bid.

“This reclamation project will remove a decades old refuse pile that has been an eyesore and safety hazard for the residents of Mather,” DEP Deputy Secretary for Active and Abandoned Mine Operations John Stefanko said. “The DEP is pleased to work with its partners in the legislature, other state agencies and the local government of Greene County to make this happen.”

The first step in the reclamation process that is currently being operated is the removal of soil from the dry lakebed of Ryerson Station State Park’s, Duke Lake.

The soil from this dried lake bed is being transported to the Mather Mine and is covering the large mounds created by the tiny pieces of refuse coal.

State officials stated that the plan is to use around 400,000 cubic yards of Duke Lake’s soil to try and create a more eye pleasing and healthier environment for those living in Mather. The soil from the lake has been tested and deemed “clean fill.”

DEP is providing an additional \$2 million for the transportation of this dirt from the lake to the refuse piles.

“The project is a great example of state agencies working together, as DCNR needed a place to put silt removed from Duke Lake and DEP was looking to complete the mine reclamation work to the Mather site,” said DCNR Secretary Ellen Ferretti. “We’re pleased that the lake sediments can be used constructively.”

Even though other initiatives to reclaim the mine have come and gone, this time the trucks can already be seen working on top of the black mounds.

This time, change is happening.

The project is scheduled to be completed in 2017.

Mather will soon no longer have the visual reminder of everything that happened there, no more black mounds cutting through the landscape.

No more health problems caused by the refuse coal piles.

The memories of the coal industry and what Mather used to be will live on in the pictures and the memories that are past down from generation to generation.

No more because it is time to move forward.