

GCIDA approves proposal for environmental assessment at Mather site

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By Bob Niedbala, Staff Writer

WAYNESBURG – Greene County Industrial Development Authority Wednesday approved a proposal from an engineering firm to complete a phase 1 environmental assessment of the Mather coal refuse site.

The board approved a proposal from Langan Engineering and Environmental Services Inc. to conduct the initial environmental study of the entire 139-acre property.

The company also will prepare the application for a grant from the state Department of Community and Economic Development to conduct a more comprehensive phase 2 environmental assessment and prepare a remediation plan.

The cost of the work is \$15,000.

GCIDA, which owns the Mather site, will be preparing a plan to reuse the Mather property once the current reclamation work at the site is completed.

Board members questioned whether the environmental study proposed by Langan would only duplicate a similar environmental assessment of the property conducted by the authority years ago.

“We want to make sure if we spend \$15,000, we get \$15,000 worth of new work,” board member Mike Belding said.

Crystal Simmons, authority manager, said Langan already reviewed the previous study.

However, since the previous study was completed, she said, the state Department of Environmental Protections changed its standards for contaminants in properties proposed for reuse.

DEP has standards for reclaimed property that differ based on whether the property will be reused for housing, recreation or industry, she said.

Before preparing a plan to develop the site, GCIDA has to know whether there will be any restrictions on its use after the reclamation work is finished.

DEP and the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources are reclaiming the Mather site, covering it with soil removed from the now-dry Duke Lake at Ryerson Station State Park.

The board discussed possible uses for the site and the importance of making sure any proposed use is acceptable to the community. Mather residents, board Chairman Joe Simatic said, had to “put up with” living next to the polluted refuse pile for many years.

The board also talked about finding corporate sponsors should the property be used for recreation and money is need to develop the site and maintain it.

In other business, the board reviewed a new cooperative agreement and memorandum of understanding with the county prepared by Belding.

One change the agreement proposed was the creation of a new position for GCIDA. That person would assist Simmons and also serve as an economic grants coordinator, assuming the responsibility of administering the Community Development Block Grant program.

Simmons also reported CleanEarth, a company that treats contaminated soils, is looking at possible sites in the county.

The company’s services could be of assistance as the authority proceeds with brownfield reclamation. Board members noted, however, the company’s operations also might be objectionable to residents.

Simmons said she would attempt to get more information about the company. She said a company representative was scheduled to meet with her and, if possible, she would visit one of the company’s work sites.