

Work to reclaim Mather coal waste dump continues

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MATHER – A contractor hired to reclaim the Mather coal refuse dump by capping the 70-acre site with soil from the lake bed at Ryerson Station State Park completed trucking material to the site.

Work at Mather is continuing, however, and no final completion date has been set, state Department of Environmental Protection spokesman John Poister said.

“The heavy grading is done, but in the next week or so they will be bringing in equipment to do more grading work,” he said.

In the next couple of weeks, the contractor also will begin seeding, mulching and liming the entire site, he said.

The contractor on the project, Berner Construction Co., earlier completed trucking about 250,000 cubic yards of soil from Ryerson Station State Park, located about 27 miles to the west.

When the project was announced in August 2014, DEP and state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources officials touted the benefits it would have for both the reclamation of Mather and the replacement of the Ryerson dam. DEP needed clean soil to cap the Mather site. DCNR also needed a place to dump the sediment that built up in the Duke Lake bed over the years before it could rebuild the dam.

DCNR announced in late July it would not rebuild the dam because of continued ground movement near the park. That decision, however, had no impact on completion of the Mather project, Poister said.

Berner began initial site preparation work at the Mather site late last fall. It began trucking soil from Ryerson in early spring, and the company's contract expires in February.

Morgan Township Supervisor Shirl Barnhart said considering the amount of materials hauled to the property, there were few problems caused by trucks bringing soil to the site. The trucks did at times leave the roads a little "messy," he said, but the company also made attempts to clean them up. The township received some complaints from residents, "but not many," he said.

The site does look better and the work has "definitely made an improvement," Barnhart said.

Greene County Industrial Development Authority, which owns the Mather property, will be developing a plan to reuse the site once reclamation work is completed. GCIDA has hired an engineering firm to conduct an environmental assessment of the site. Before it can make plans for the property, it has to know whether there will be any restrictions on its use after reclamation is completed.

The contract to Berner for the reclamation totaled \$1.59 million. DEP also provided additional funds, earlier estimated at \$2 million, to truck the soil from Ryerson to Mather. The reclamation project is funded by a federal Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation grant.

Soil removal at Duke Lake was completed with money DCNR received from Consol Energy as part of a settlement to end litigation over damage to the Duke Lake dam.