

State awards \$200,000 grant for environmental assessment at Mather

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By Bob Niedbala, Staff Writer



GCIDA Director Crystal Simmons discusses a \$200,000 state grant to complete an environmental assessment of the Mather coal waste reclamation project. – Courtesy of Bob Niedbala/Observer-Reporter

WAYNESBURG – Greene County Industrial Development Authority was awarded a \$200,000 state grant to complete an environmental assessment of the portion of the Mather reclamation site most likely to be developed first.

The authority received the grant for the phase II environmental assessment from the state Department of Community and Economic Development's Industrial Sites Reuse Program.

The study area will cover property at the western end of the Mather site, including the 27 acres GCIDA received several years ago from Atlas Services that contains old railroad ties as well as the adjoining reservoir property owned by Morgan Township.

Of the entire Mather site, this is the area that will probably be available for re-use first, GCIDA Director Crystal Simmons said. To provide the “match” for the DCED grant, Greene County and Morgan Township are each contributing \$15,000 and the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds is kicking in \$20,000, Simmons said.

“We’re partnering with the township, which hopes to see something done with the reservoir property,” Simmons said.

The authority also received support from the county, as well as the foundation in the past for the Mather project, she said.

The phase II assessment, Simmons said, “will help in the planning process, telling us what might have to be done to make the property ready for re-use.”

It could tell the authority, for instance, whether the property has any soil contamination that may have to be addressed before the property can be developed, she said.

Reclamation of the 65-acre refuse site, itself, is now wrapping up, Simmons said. Workers were on site last week completing some soil and sedimentation control work.

The reclamation of the refuse pile was done by the state Department of Environmental Protection and the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

The plan included covering the site with 2 or more feet of clean soil taken from the dry lake bed at Ryerson Station State Park.

Trucking the 250,000 cubic yards of soil from Ryerson was completed earlier. The property also was seeded.

Once all the work is done on the refuse site and a final DEP inspection completed, the site must sit idle for a year, Simmons said.

“They have to keep an eye on it to make sure there are no slips, that vegetation is taking hold and there are no other issues with it,” she said.

“After the property sits for a year, we’ll begin planning the next step in the process of determining how the property can be used,” she said.

Some limitations to the use of 65-acre parcel may apply, Simmons said, because that portion of the property is classified as abandoned mine land.