



Pennsylvania
Department of Environmental Protection

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Lt. Gov. Davis and DEP Acting Secretary Shirley Celebrate Grand Opening of Blacklick Creek AMD Treatment Facility to Improve Water Quality in Western Pennsylvania

New facility, funded with both state and federal monies, will improve 25 stream miles of impaired waterways in Indiana and Cambria Counties

Vintondale, PA – Lieutenant Governor Austin Davis and Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Acting Secretary Jessica Shirley celebrated the grand opening of the Blacklick Treatment Facility, the newest Abandoned Mine Drainage (AMD) Treatment Facility today during an open house event. Local community members and elected officials toured the facility and learned how it will eliminate uncontrolled discharges of untreated mine water into Blacklick Creek. The new facility will improve roughly 25 stream miles in the Blacklick Creek and Conemaugh River in Indiana and Cambria counties.

“Many communities like Vintondale or my hometown of McKeesport feel forgotten or left behind by leaders in Washington and Harrisburg,” said **Lt. Gov. Austin Davis**. “I’m here today to say that Governor Shapiro and I will never leave any community behind. We’re going to keep showing up, and we’re going to keep investing in places like the Blacklick Creek Watershed.”

“Abandoned Mine Drainage is a serious problem and affects approximately 5,500 miles of streams in Pennsylvania, and pretty soon we can scratch another 25 miles off that list,” said **DEP Acting Secretary Jessica Shirley**. “People in this community are all too familiar with its effects, as Blacklick Creek’s orange color offers a daily reminder of the damage this water is doing to the creek. This new facility will not only change the chemistry and color of the water but the lives of the people who will now be able to enjoy it.”

The facility will control and treat three major sources (Commercial No. 16, Vinton No. 6, and Wehrum mines) of abandoned mine drainage into the Blacklick Creek Watershed. Blacklick Creek has been on DEP’s impaired waters list since its inception in 2006, impaired by mine drainage, which caused unbalanced pH and high levels of iron, aluminum, and manganese.

Mine water will be collected and pumped from the three sources to the treatment plant. This water will undergo a process to increase the pH of the water, forcing dissolved

metals (aluminum, iron, and manganese) out. The metal particles then settle out of the water in large concrete tanks (clarifiers) and a constructed wetland while the treated water discharges to Blacklick Creek. The design flow of the treatment plant is 5,000 gallons per minute (7.2 million gallons per day), which will aid in restoring approximately 25 miles of the creek into a viable fishing area. It will also provide an appealing visual experience for users of the Ghost Town Trail, a 49-mile scenic and historic trail in Indiana and Cambria Counties.

The project, which cost over \$27 million to construct, was funded by the 2021 and 2022 Capital Budget Approved Funds in state funds, federal funds through the [Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization \(AMLER\) Program](#), and [Pennsylvania's Acid Mined Drainage 30% Set-Aside Program](#). The facility's projected operating cost are approximately \$600,000 and will be funded with [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funds](#).

The Blacklick Treatment Facility is one of the DEP's Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation 12 active AMD treatment plants it is running or funding. An additional 12 facilities are currently in various stages of development or design.

Pennsylvania has the largest inventory of abandoned coal mines in the nation. To date, Pennsylvania has rehabilitated more than 151,000 acres of abandoned coal mines, and with this project, will continue this vital work that protects the health and safety of our communities.

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