



Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

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\$4 Million in Abandoned Mine Lands Pilot Grants Announced for Economic Development and Job Creation in Eastern Kentucky

PRESTONSBURG, Ky. (Aug. 2, 2017) - U.S. Rep. Harold "Hal" Rogers (KY-05) and the Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet (EEC) today announced three grants worth almost \$5 million to spur economic development and job creation in Eastern Kentucky.

Two of the grants were awarded by the EEC's Division of Abandoned Mine Lands, as part of the 2016 Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) Pilot program to revitalize the coalfields in Kentucky's Appalachian region.

The City of Prestonsburg has been given preliminary approval for a \$1.95 million grant towards the development of its Prestonsburg to David "Rails to Trails"

project. In addition, Royalton Trail Town, Inc. has been preliminarily approved for a \$1.9 million grant towards the development of a campsite/recreational area on a 15-acre tract in Royalton that lies along the Dawkins Line Rail Trail and the Licking River.

Both projects were unveiled at the Big Sandy Area Development District office in Prestonsburg, Ky. by Congressman Rogers, who championed \$195 million in federal funding for the AML Pilot program over the last two years. The announcements are part of a joint effort with Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR), a grassroots effort to revitalize the future of Eastern Kentucky.

Joining Congressman Rogers were state Senator Brandon Smith, and state Representatives John Blanton and Larry Brown, as well as Energy and Environment Cabinet Secretary Charles Snavelly.

Also announced was a \$1 million U. S. Army Corps of Engineers grant to help construct a new Big Sandy Regional Waste Water Treatment Plant and provide sanitary sewer service to 3,000 families and 300 businesses along the U.S. 23 corridor between Prestonsburg and Pikeville.

“We’re actively investing in the revival of coal country by opening new doors of opportunity for job creation, tourism and innovation across the region,” said Congressman Rogers, who is also advocating for continued federal funding for the AML Pilot Program in 2018. “Together, we are paving a brighter future for Eastern Kentucky, through improved infrastructure and a stronger workforce.”

“Projects such as these will help establish eastern Kentucky as a significant tourist attraction, and will also bring sustainable jobs and much-needed revenue to the region,” Gov Bevin said.

The “Rails to Trail” project will acquire old CSX rail lines to develop trails from Prestonsburg to David, including a Levisa Fork water trail beginning at the Middle Creek National Battlefield.

The Royalton Trail Town Development project will include campsites with cabins for rent and horse barns. The project will spur economic development and recreational growth in Magoffin County and the three-county area directly impacted by the 36-mile Dawkins Line Rail Trail.

Both projects are part of Kentucky's \$30 million portion of the federal AML Pilot program, first funded in 2016 through the U.S. Office of Surface Mining and Reclamation Enforcement (OSMRE), to help revive communities in coal-producing states hardest hit by the downturn of the coal industry in recent years.

Secretary Snavely called the project funding a continued example of how the AML Pilot program is making a difference in Eastern Kentucky. "It is rewarding to see so many worthy projects get funding so that they can be an important part of the economic rebuilding of Eastern Kentucky," Sec. Snavely said.

Jared Arnett, executive director of SOAR, called the projects another step toward success. "The investments in these projects are a direct result of the faith and grit of the people of Eastern Kentucky, sparking hope and encouragement as we work together toward a better future."

The AML Pilot project is a joint effort by the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development, the Department for Local Government, the SOAR initiative in Eastern Kentucky, the Kentucky Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet and the Energy and Environment Cabinet, Division of Abandoned Mine Lands.

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