Virginia Department of
Mines Minerals and Energy

Division of Mined Land Reclamation
Abandoned Mined Land Program
Proposed 2018 AML Pilot Program Project Request Form

Revision Submission Date: April 10, 2019

Name: The Nature Conservancy – *Enhancing the Mountain View Trail System for Greater Economic Impact*
Municipality: n/a
County: Wise County
Location: (Long/Lat): -82.36, 36.95
Primary Project Partner(s): The Nature Conservancy, Spearhead Trails

Project Description: The Nature Conservancy is seeking $222,000 in AML Pilot Funding to enhance the economic impact of the Mountain View Trail System that connects the towns of Coeburn and St. Paul in Wise County, VA. The Mountain View Trail System is a multi-use (primarily ATVs) public recreational trail situated on approximately 2,500 acres of lands affected by former coal mining and containing documented Abandoned Mined Land features (e.g. highwalls, auger holes, etc.) The Mountain View system is on land owned by a private timber company which provides public recreational access via a lease agreement with the Southwest Regional Recreation Authority (i.e. "SRRA", "Spearhead Trails") – a public corporation established by the Virginia General Assembly. The mission of Spearhead Trails is to create and maintain a system of recreational trails and appurtenant facilities that can facilitate, enhance and sustain economic development and job creation in Southwest Virginia.

The Mountain View Trail System is one of five trails developed and maintained by Spearhead Trails on former coal mined lands in Virginia. Collectively, these trail systems are having a substantial positive economic impact on towns and counties in Southwest Virginia. A 2017 economic impact study completed by the Institute for Service Research, included with this application as Attachment C, found that the cumulative economic impact of Spearhead Trails from 2013-2017 was over $18 million. Breaking down that cumulative impact, the study concluded that:

- In FY2016-17, visitors to Spearhead Trails spent an estimated $5.8M in the SRRA region (i.e. the Virginia Coalfields).
- The economic activity stimulated by visitation to Spearhead Trails supported approximately 94 full- time equivalent (FTE) jobs in Virginia in FY2016-17. Additional part-time jobs are also supported.
- The economic activity stimulated by Spearhead Trails generated approximately $528K in state and local tax revenue in Virginia during FY2016-17.

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These are very encouraging statistics for Virginia's coalfield counties, and the positive economic and social impacts of these recreational trails are expected to grow in the future as their use and popularity increases. However, the continued and increased success of the Mountain View Trail System (and other trails managed by Spearhead Trails) is crucially dependent on maintaining and improving the quality of trail users' experience. In this regard, there is significant room for investment when it comes to trail construction, repair, design and maintenance, signage, user facilities, and other recreational infrastructure. There is also a critical need to reclaim certain AML features that are found along the trail corridor (e.g. highwalls, open auger holes, etc.) that pose safety risks for trail users. An injury or fatality related to a trail-side AML feature would be tragic; and it could have a very negative impact on the ability of the Spearhead Trail system to attract visitors and support local economies.

In this AML Pilot proposal, The Nature Conservancy is requesting funding to work with Spearhead Trails and local reclamation contractors to do two things:

(1) make improvements to the Mountain View Trail System by installing visitor signage, repairing and upgrading trails that have erosion and safety issues, developing scenic overlooks, and installing bridges at key stream crossings for water quality improvement and user safety.
(2) reclaim approximately 20-30 AML features (e.g. open auger holes) that can be found along pre-1977 highwalls that are adjacent to the trail corridor and present significant human safety issues.

The land on which these trail improvements and AML reclamation activities will be conducted is currently owned by The Forestland Group (TFG). TFG has granted public access to these trails via a recreational lease agreement with Spearhead Trails. TFG is actively negotiating the sale of the +/2,500 acres that contain the Mountain View System to The Nature Conservancy (TNC). TNC plans to complete a purchase of this area in 2019. When TNC completes its purchase, it will assume the current lease that Spearhead has with TFG.
TNC is extremely excited to work on this proposed AML Pilot project with Spearhead Trails and local contractors. If awarded AML Pilot funding, TNC will sub-contract with Spearhead Trails to complete the trail improvement/enhancement components of this project; and with local reclamation sub-contractors to complete the AML reclamation. Spearhead Trails has not been chosen through a competitive process. In this case, they are the obvious choice as TNC's primary partner/sub-contractor for the trail enhancement work since they have primary responsibility to manage and maintain the Mountain View Trail System (via their current lease and as the

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established trail authority for Southwest Virginia as designated by the Virginia General Assembly).

OSMRE AML Pilot Program Guidelines Category: B

Total Estimated Project Cost: $1,347,000

- *Land Acquisition (+/-2,500): $1,125,000
- Mountain View Trail Improvements: $122,000
- AML Reclamation: $90,000
- NEPA Compliance: $10,000

**Not funded by AML Pilot*

Proposed AML Pilot Funding Amount: $222,000 for trail improvement work, reclamation of 20-30 open auger holes found along old abandoned highwalls, and NEPA compliance (note: pilot program budget and scope of work is broken down into more detail below)

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Mountain View Trail System – Trail Improvements, Supplies and Construction Budget ($122,000):

Description	Estimated Quantity	Units	Cost (per unit)	Total Cost
6” Stone	200	Tons	$30.00	$6,000.00
1” Stone	200	Tons	$30.00	$6,000.00
#57 Stone	200	Tons	$30.00	$6,000.00
Bridging Material*	300	Linear Feet	$50.00	$15,000.00
Geotextile Materials (Woven Fabric)	8	Roll @ 142 Ft Ea.	$500.00	$4,000.00
Easy Pave Grids**	5000	Square Foot	$3.00	$15,000.00
Silt Fencing	50	Rolls @100 Ft Ea.	$40.00	$2,000.00
Grass Seed	50	50 Lb Sack	$140.00	$7,000.00
Signage	500	Per Sign	$12.00	$6,000.00
Scenic Overlook Development	2	Per Unit	$2,500.00	$5,000.00
Construction/Contractual				$50,000.00

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Mountain View Trail System – Trail Improvements, Basic Scope of Work:

There are multiple locations where the existing trails exhibit stability, safety, and erosion problems. In these areas, gravel, geotextile, and easy pave grids will be used to improve the condition of the trail surface and corridor for user safety and to improve water quality. Where trails cross streams or other water features (e.g. continuous seeps), bridges will be installed. In areas that require re-grading and earth moving for trail reconstruction and stabilization, silt fencing and non-invasive grass seed will be used. New trail signs will be placed along the trail corridors in locations that enhance rider experience by providing directional and/or interpretive information about the trail system, scenic views, and the history of mining activities that took place in the areas. Two new scenic overlooks will be developed with viewing decks, picnic tables, interpretive signage, and other features that will increase user enjoyment and understanding of local history and the biodiversity of southwestern Virginia. Example pictures are provided in Attachment A of this proposal.

Mountain View Trail System—Abandoned Mined Land Reclamation Costs ($90,000):

Description	Estimated Quantity	Cost (per unit)	Total Cost
Expanding Foam	30 yards	$230/yard	$6,900
Rockfall Protection Netting	1800 sq. feet	$15/sq ft	$27,000
Safety Berms	80 hrs	$150/hr	$12,000
Other Construction/Contractual Materials/Drainage/Re-Vegetation			$44,100

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Mountain View Trail System – Abandoned Mined Land Reclamation, Basic Scope of Work:

Preliminary reconnaissance of the Mountain View Trail System by DMME reclamation specialists indicates that there are as many as 20-30 open auger holes along the trail system that need to be reclaimed to address human safety concerns. The approach recommended by DMME specialists is to use grout or expanding foam to seal open auger holes; and then to implement earth moving as needed to cover these holes with existing available material. Netting and safety berms will be installed during the reclamation process to add protection from rock falls in highwall areas near the trail corridor. Example pictures of these AML features are included in Attachment A.

Mountain View Trail System—NEPA Compliance ($10,000): Following the guidelines of the AML pilot program it is assumed that a NEPA analysis will need to be conducted for both aspects of the project (trails and AML). Based on consultation with Virginia DMME, we estimate the cost of the compliance to be $10,000.

Eligible for Title IV AML Funds *(Reference OSM Guidance Document)***?** Yes. Based on consultation with Virginia DMME staff, the site appears to be eligible for Title IV funds, but only as a Priority 3 site. As a Priority 3 site, this would not typically be addressed by Title IV funds.

Is there any ongoing operation and maintenance (O&M) funding requirement? No

Other Project Funding Source(s) (Amount and Status):

- Land Acquisition Funding: The Nature Conservancy has the financial resources in place for the purchase of the +/- 2,500 acres on which the Mountain View Trail System is situated. Funding for this land acquisition is private and sourced from TNC members, supporters, and partners. If TNC and its partners can successfully negotiate a purchase agreement with the current landowner, we are committed to completing the land purchase in support of this AML pilot project in 2019.

Anticipated Project Start and Completion Date: The project can be initiated immediately after the AML Pilot Program funds are awarded, and all grant agreement and necessary paperwork are executed. We anticipate 18-24 months for the completion of the project once it is started.

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Current Project Status: The project has been recommended by Virginia DMME for funding and is now moving forward for consideration and approval by OSM. The Nature Conservancy continues in its active conversations with the current landowner about a potential purchase of the land area in which the trail is situated. We anticipate closing on the property by May 31, 2019. A purchase and sales agreement should be signed in April. TNC has worked with Spearhead Trails to develop a preliminary scope of work and budget for the needed trail enhancements on the Mountain View System. TNC has worked with Virginia DMME to develop a preliminary scope of work and budget for AML reclamation.

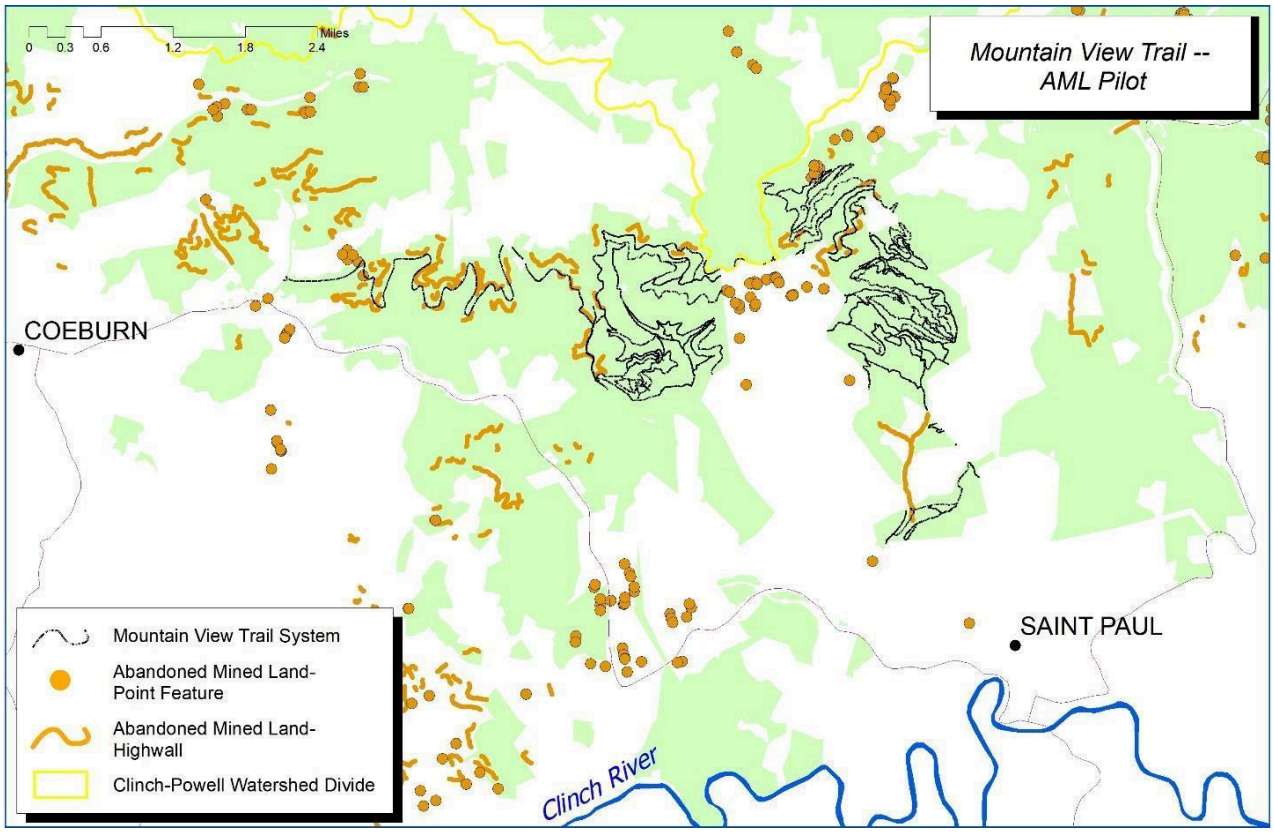
Are Project designs available: No. Specific designs for trail enhancements and AML reclamation will be completed by Spearhead Trails and other local sub-contractors (in consultation with Virginia DMME and TNC) as a first step if TNC is awarded AML Pilot funding for this project.

Summary of any Significant Project Issues: The only significant issue that could alter our approach to the project would be if The Nature Conservancy is unable to purchase the land on which the project is located. If we run into a problem on this front, TNC will notify DMME/OSM immediately. Our first alternative will be to seek permission from The Forestland Group (TFG) to complete the project under their ownership. If (as the landowner) TFG is unwilling to provide their consent for trail improvements and reclamation efforts, TNC would need to develop an alternative project with DMME and OSM approval; or otherwise return the funding.

Describe AML features being reclaimed and/or nexus with AML lands and features associated with the project: The Mountain View Trail system is located on former mined lands as shown below on Map 1. The main trails run along the Upper Banner and Lower Banner seams that were mined pre-1977 using a mix of “shoot and shove” and auger techniques. A review of DMME’s AML database shows that there are a mix of AML features in this area including old highwalls, portals, auger holes, etc. Features to be reclaimed in this project include abandoned and open auger holes found along old mining benches.

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Map 1: Direct Overlap of Mountain View Trail System with AML features

How likely are the project partners to complete any work required beyond the reclamation project work? Extremely likely. Spearhead Trails has an experienced and competent staff that are continually engaged in trail construction, development, maintenance, and monitoring as funding allows. All the trail enhancement activities proposed in this application (e.g. signage, trail stabilization, bridge crossings, scenic overlook development, etc.) are things that Spearhead Trails staff and contractors know how to do. The only limiting factor is funding.

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Provide description of anticipated outcomes relative to Economic Development and/or Community Development: The Mountain View Trail System is already an important social and economic asset for the towns of Coeburn and St Paul, and Wise County (as evidenced in the attached Economic Impact Study and the letters of support included with this project application). The enhancements to the Mountain View Trail System proposed in this AML Pilot Project will build on the existing success of the trail by further improving user experience and safety, and thereby increasing overall use and enjoyment of the trails by locals and visitors. This increased use will have direct and indirect economic and community benefits for St. Paul, Coeburn, and Wise County. St. Paul and Coeburn are the locations of the two main trailheads for the Mountain View Trail System and they serve as gateway communities to the trail. Increased enjoyment and use of the trail system by visitors and locals will provide a direct economic lift to these two towns in the form of additional visitor spending on food, lodging fuel, equipment, etc. Indirectly, this spending will support local jobs in those industries that provide these goods and services.

How will these outcomes be measured? The outcomes of this project will be measured in a few different ways. The number of trail permits sold in Wise County is one good metric that we can track to gauge increases in user activity pre and post project. If we improve the trail users' experience with trail improvements, kiosks, overlooks, etc. we should see an increase in permit sales over the next several years. This increase in permit sales and trail use can then be translated into economic benefit indicators. We can also measure our improvement in the trail conditions through Spearhead Trails' systematic reporting system. Trails are scored by Spearhead rangers each day and these scores are then rolled up into monthly "trail condition scores". We can evaluate the trail condition scores before and after the project to quantify our improvements.

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Long-Term benefits to the local Economy and/or Community Development (Refer to the OSMRE AML Pilot Program Guidance Section III. 'Economic and Community Development Nexus' for example metrics for the benefits): The longer-term benefits of a Mountain View Trail System that has been enhanced by the infrastructure improvements and AML reclamation contemplated in this proposal will be assessed via periodic economic impact studies such as the one provided as Attachment C to this application. These periodic studies (which Spearhead Trails completes every few years) include detailed information about the volume of permit sales by area; and they also collect a variety of qualitative and quantitative information from users of the trail system. The reports then translate this trail use data into important economic measures such as jobs created, jobs supported, visitor spending, and associated economic impacts. Through the publication of these periodic economic impact reports, these and other metrics can be provided in a transparent fashion to help show the longer-term benefits of this AML Pilot project.

For DMME Use Only:

Primary VA AML Project Contact:
AML Pilot Project Name:
Problem Area Number and
Name: Project Number(s):
Title IV AML grant funding (Amount and Status)