



Dedicated to Mine Land Reclamation, Conservation, & Economic Development in the Wyoming Valley

Community Involvement Plan

Brownfields Cleanup Cooperative Agreement #4B-953A0163-0
Center Street Reclamation | Newport Township, PA

Prepared by
Earth Conservancy
V1 | November 18, 2025

1.0 OVERVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PLAN

In 2025, Earth Conservancy (EC) was awarded a \$1.6 million cooperative agreement from the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) through the Brownfields Cleanup Program to reclaim ±24 acres of abandoned mine land in Newport Township, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania. As stated in the USEPA-approved Work Plan, EC is to develop and implement a Community Involvement Plan (CIP). The CIP describes how EC will increase public awareness and encourage community participation as the project unfolds. The CIP is a living document and will be amended as necessary to meet its objectives.

2.0 SITE BACKGROUND

The Center Street project site is owned by EC. It is bordered to the north by property owned by a mining company; to the east by Center Street and a wooded parcel of private property; and to the south and west by additional EC land, part of which was reclaimed by PADEP in 1995. Historically, the area was both deep and strip-mined by the Glen-Nan Coal Company, which became part of the Blue Coal Corporation. Three different coal seams were mined (No. 1, Kidney, and Hillman veins). The site is characterized by a highly irregular topography comprised of multiple pits with large corresponding piles of mining waste. Elevations vary from 650' to 810'. There are several areas where illegal dumping has occurred.

The site is part of the Newport Creek watershed, a 14 square-mile subwatershed of the Susquehanna River Drainage Basin. Due to mining activity, naturally functioning hydrology in the area has been destroyed. Presently, precipitation filters down through the spoil piles into the subterranean mine pools. Excess water sits in two large, excavated pits, which discharge directly into an unnamed perennial tributary to the Newport Creek. This water – as well as resurfacing water from the mine pools – is contaminated with acid mine drainage (AMD), which flows into the Susquehanna River.

3.0 SITE INVESTIGATION

In 1993, prior to Earth Conservancy's purchase of the Blue Coal Corporation estate, all property underwent a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) by Resource Technologies Corporation of State College, PA, which indicated the area off Center Street was partly strip-mined. A search on the US Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service's Web Soil Survey confirms

that approximately 82% of the site is Strip Mine (Sm), including pits.¹ As described in the *Soil Survey of Luzerne County* (1981) by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA):

- Strip mine (Sm) soils are a “nearly level to very steep mixture of the bedrock and unconsolidated soil and rock material through surface mining to expose anthracite coal. Runoff is slow to very rapid, and the hazard of erosion is moderate to severe. Most areas are extremely acid” (p. 89).²

Strip mine areas are not considered to be comprised of hazardous material.

In 2024, Verdantas, LLC, completed a Phase I ESA for the Center Street site, which noted the soil at the property is primarily cut and fill, with some Arnot-Rock outcroppings (8%–25% slopes). These soils have a high rate of water transmission, meaning precipitation passes quickly through the strip-mined materials and into groundwater/subsurface flow. There were no ongoing or anticipated environmental enforcement actions related to the site. No recognized environmental conditions (RECs) were found to exist. The site was found not to pose a significant environmental risk. A Phase II ESA was not recommended.

The site is listed on the Abandoned Mine Land Inventory System of the US Office of Surface Mining and Mine Reclamation Enforcement, identification #PA-1651. Identified features are spoil piles and strip pits.

4.0 SCOPE OF WORK

Reclamation of the Center Street site will primarily involve mass cut-and-fill earthwork to reduce the spoil piles and fill the pits. The project will begin with competitive bidding for engineering services through a publicly published request for proposals (RFP). The selected engineer will conduct a thorough site analysis and develop detailed design plans and specifications. Construction services then will be bid via another publicly advertised RFP. Key steps in reclaiming the Center Street site for safe and productive reuse include:

- **Site Preparation:** Involves creating site access, clearing vegetation, installing erosion/sediment controls, setting boundary and grading markers, and stockpiling on-site topsoil for reuse.
- **Grading:** Heavy machinery will regrade ±24 acres, including the two water-filled pits – each 2.3 acres and 26-32 feet deep – to create stable, level areas suitable for future development. Stormwater management features, including rock-lined swales and a sediment basin, will be installed to reestablish natural drainage paths.
- **Revegetation:** Stockpiled topsoil will be redistributed across the site and supplemented with additional material, creating a barrier to reduce water infiltration through the spoils and provide a healthy base for vegetation. The site then will be seeded with a custom grass blend, and 200 trees will be planted along the stream, not only improving aesthetics, but also providing environmental benefits by slowing run-off, stabilizing land, reducing erosion, and restoring habitat.

The cleanup will fully comply with all applicable state and federal regulations (e.g., environmental, labor). All required permits (e.g., NPDES) will be obtained. EC, along with the project engineer and contractor, will ensure adherence to these requirements, with EC overseeing all activities. The grant-funded cleanup of the site is anticipated to take four years, starting in October 2025 and ending in Fall 2027. EC will be responsible for the site as long as it retains ownership. A map depicting the general location of the project is included as Attachment A.

¹ USDA. Web Soil Survey Soil Map. [Map]. <https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>

² Bush, R.D. (1981). *Soil Survey of Luzerne County, Pennsylvania*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service in Cooperation with The Pennsylvania State University College of Agriculture and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources State Conservation Commission.

5.0 COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

Communities within northeastern Pennsylvania flourished with the rise of anthracite coal mining. However, when the coal companies closed, the environmental and economic landscape that remained was grim. According to PADEP, there are 840 abandoned minelands in the northeast region,³ and thousands of miles of damaged waterways. Furthermore, the economy has yet to fully rebound. Luzerne County's unemployment rate is 5.0%, above the state average of 4.0%.⁴ It also coincides with poor performance on measures of income, education, and health.

The Center Street project is located in Census Tract 2156, a 17.2 square-mile parcel, with a population of 4,460.⁵ It embodies many of the challenges faced by communities living amid legacy mine lands. Its topography is unnatural. Mountainous piles of cast-off rock are juxtaposed against yawning strip pits and stark orange ponds and streams. The spoil material is unstable, inviting injury, prone to subsidence and fire, and an impediment to environmental health. Within a ½-mile radius of the Center Street site, PADEP's Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation (BAMR) has responded to 10 general AML complaints and hazards, five subsidence events, and three mine fires.⁶ West Nile Virus was noted as a specific concern in one inquiry, underscoring the area's broader public health risks. Two additional complaints triggered emergency response interventions.

6.0 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

The CIP sets out a variety of opportunities for the public to learn about and participate in the Center Street reclamation project, with the goals of establishing communication channels, increasing public awareness, and identifying priorities and concerns. The CIP will ensure that the communication process is ongoing and evolves as the project moves forward. Updates will be added to the following activities as they occur.

6.1 Newport Township Council Meeting

During the engineering design phase, a presentation about the project will be given to the Newport Township Commissioners during its monthly public meeting at the Newport Township Municipal Building located at 351 West Kirmar Avenue, Nanticoke, PA 18634.

6.2 Public Participation Meeting

Also during the engineering design phase, an informational public meeting/open house on the project and the draft ABCA will be held in EC's Conference Room located at 101 South Main Street, Ashley, PA. The meeting will be advertised online one week prior to the event.

6.3 ABCA Public Comment

The draft (and eventually final) ABCA will be posted on EC's website on the Center Street Reclamation project page where it will remain until cleanup is complete. The public may provide comments via email at e.hughes@earthconservancy.org or by calling 570.823.3445. Written responses to significant and appropriate comments, and documentation of any changes to the cleanup plan will be prepared. The ABCA will also be available in the Information Repository at EC's offices.

³ The Institute. (2019). *Appalachian Regional Commission Study: Economic Impacts and Effects of Coal Mining in Northeastern Pennsylvania*.

⁴ PA Department of Labor & Industry. (2025, August). *Luzerne County Profile*.
<https://www.workstats.dli.pa.gov/Documents/County%20Profiles/Luzerne%20County.pdf>

⁵ US Census Bureau. 2023: *American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates Data Profile* (Tract 2156, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania).
<https://data.census.gov/>. ACS statistics going forward will reflect data from these three entities, unless otherwise noted.

⁶ PADEP. *AML Inquiries and Complaints* [map]. eMapPA. <http://www.depgis.state.pa.us/emappa/>. Retrieved October 7, 2024.

6.4 Project Webpage

Information about this project and relevant documentation will be posted on EC's website on a page dedicated to the Center Street reclamation project (<https://www.earthconservancy.org/our-work/abandoned-mine-land-reclamation/center-street/>).

6.5 Direct Mailing

In addition to two public meetings held during the project's design phase, EC will formally notify residents by mail within a 1/4-mile radius of the site about the project before the start of construction. The notice will include an overview of the project and contact information for follow-up inquiries.

6.6 Other Communications

EC may use social media posts, newspaper ads, and press releases to reach target communities and notify stakeholders about project events and activities.

6.7 Signage

An informational sign will be posted on the project site before the start of construction and will remain until the cleanup is complete. The sign will read: "USEPA Brownfields Cleanup in Process. Reclamation of Mine-Scarred Lands. For more information visit www.earthconservancy.org or call 570.823.3445."

6.8 Accessibility

Inclusiveness is a goal, and while English is the dominant language spoken in the target area, EC will take steps to secure translation, as needed.

7.0 INFORMATION REPOSITORY & ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS

USEPA requires the establishment of an information repository, which will contain the documents used to select and implement the cleanup plan. Documents will include the ABCA, site investigation reports, the cleanup plan, cleanup standards used, responses to public comments, and verification when the project is complete. The Administrative Record will be available to residents in-person at EC's offices, located at 101 South Main Street, Ashley, PA 18706. Supplementary repository of documents will be available online to provide remote public access.

8.0 POINTS OF CONTACT

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TBD by publicly competed Request for Proposals

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Location Map



EARTH CONSERVANCY LANDS

CENTER STREET RECLAMATION AREA
NEWPORT TOWNSHIP



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