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TOP STORY

Pipeline company to give \$100K to SCRA

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The water that usually flows under this pedestrian bridge at Veterans Memorial Sports Complex in Kulpmont is susceptible to leaking from a porous creek bed and into a mine underneath it. The Shamokin Creek Restoration Alliance is planning to construct a wetland nearby.

BECKY LOCK/STAFF PHOTO

KULPMONT — The Shamokin Creek Restoration Alliance (SCRA) will receive \$100,000 from the Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Co. LLC (Transco) to fund two water quality improvement projects, the state Department of Environmental Protection announced Tuesday.

The \$100,000 will go toward projects in the Shamokin Creek watershed along Quaker Run and Buck Run in the Borough of Kulpmont in Northumberland County.

“This is great news for the upper Shamokin Creek valley and the Shamokin Creek Restoration Alliance, our area’s only environmental group,” said Steven Motyka, borough councilman and director of the alliance.

He said the project will focus on stormwater management and will involve the addition of a wetland to hold runoff.

Quaker Run begins near Kulpmont and flows through the Veterans Memorial Sports Complex, which is the site where the wetland will be constructed. It will be on land owned by the Susquehanna Coal Company.

“There are voids in the creek bed that go into the mine,” Motyka said, explaining that water in the channel at the pedestrian bridge doesn’t make it very far “with the creek bed being so porous.”

“Part of that fix would be to add a clay base” to the creek bed, he explained.

The wetland also will work to hold water. It will be created toward the west end of the Veterans Memorial field, along the creek channel behind the “Stonehedge” monument and near where a pollinator garden is under construction.

Officially, the wetland project involves “targeted restoration efforts” by the SCRA to “reduce water quality impairments,” according to court documents, and “to help achieve the total maximum daily load requirements (TMDL)” for the Shamokin Creek Watershed.

TMDL refers to the maximum amount of a pollutant allowed to enter a waterbody so that it still meets water quality standards.

The funds for the alliance’s project are in addition to a civil penalty of more than \$736,200 levied against the company for violations associated with the construction of the Atlantic Sunrise Pipeline in Northumberland, Schuylkill, Columbia, Lancaster, Lebanon, Luzerne, Lycoming, Susquehanna and Wyoming counties.

The \$100,000 is not part of the civil penalty, but rather considered a “community environmental project.”

Funding

Last July, state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Patrick McDonnell was on-site to examine the effects of acid mine drainage and what the alliance has done to remediate the issue.

“We were told then that they were very impressed” with what the alliance has done, Motyka said, and would work to get the alliance funding through penalty cases.

The funding was processed early this month, he added, and work will begin “as soon as we receive the check.”

The alliance will work with its watershed wetlands specialist; engineering firm, Brinkash & Associates, of Locust Gap; and Susquehanna Coal Co., as well as the Northumberland County Conservation District.

Meanwhile, the civil penalty will provide DEP with \$680,000, while the remainder of \$56,294.11 will be distributed among the county conservation districts that inspected the Atlantic Sunrise Pipeline during its construction to reimburse the costs they incurred during the inspections.

“Impacts from construction activities that harm or have the potential to harm waters of the commonwealth are unacceptable, and we will continue hold operators accountable,” said McDonnell said in a news release.

The violations included failure to properly maintain erosion and sedimentation best management practices, inadvertent returns of drilling fluids at drilling sites in Lebanon, Luzerne and Wyoming counties, and sediment discharge into waters of the commonwealth.