

Mine reclamation support, coal controversial

By CODY McDEVITT
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There are a number of controversial issues stemming from coal energy that continue to face Somerset and Cambria counties with piles of waste coal remaining on the landscape and a number of groups framing the debate as that of water pollution versus air pollution. The local problem will take center stage across the nation later this year with a major film set to air on television.

As some in the local community see it, it's a delicate balancing act, but with advances made in coal energy plants, they don't think there is a reason for why the coal piles should remain where they are. The land should be reclaimed and the water quality restored to what it was before mining took place. Andy McAllister, watershed coordinator for the Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation, said the problems that extenuate from the piles is great cause for concern.

"The water pollution goes into the creeks and for long distances, the iron smothers any bugs or animals that live in the water," McAllister said. "So fish can't find food, so they have to leave. And any of the metals that form or precipitate smother the bottom. Then you have the problem of acidity. It would be like living in vinegar. You're not going to find things living in there because of the damage it would do for their bodies."

Other prominent national organizations disagree with some of the local groups pushing for the maintenance of coal energy plants. The Sierra Club, an environmental lobbying group based in Oakland, California, has an initiative called the Beyond Coal campaign. They argue that coal burning is responsible for one third of the U.S. Carbon Emissions, which is the main contributor to climate change. They also estimated that it causes as many as 13,000 premature deaths yearly and \$100 billion in annual health costs.

(See RECLAMATION, A9)



Submitted photo

One of the polluted streams that is near to a refuse coal site. Water pollution, along with air pollution, are two of the major environmental concerns associated with mining and burning of coal. And the ideas of how to eliminate one are often at odds with the other.



Submitted photo

Rebecca Peterson Witt photographed the flooding of Route 653, New Centerville Hill in Rockwood Borough Sunday evening.

Flash flooding damages homes, roads in Somerset County over weekend

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Somerset County was hit with flash flooding late on Sunday afternoon, leaving many roads closed and many houses damaged by water.

Somerset County 911 received be-

tween 90 to 100 calls related to flooding, according to Dave Johnson, a dispatcher with the service. Most of the calls came from New Centerville, Rockwood, Somerset and Listie. The center received reports of between 2 to 4 inches of rain falling in a short period of time.

An apartment building on the

400 block of Broadway Street in Rockwood was evacuated.

The Rockwood Volunteer Fire Department set up a shelter at the fire hall and the Salvation Army's Canteen truck was out helping people as well.

(See FLOODING, A9)

Memorial Day parades, ceremonies honor fallen military

NEW YORK (AP) — Americans marched in Memorial Day parades Monday and came together in solemn ceremonies to pay their respects to those killed in service to the country.

Remembrances of fallen military members went from New York City, where Memorial Day fell on the last day of Fleet Week New York, to Los Angeles, where an 8-foot bronze sculpture was being unveiled in honor of the dead.

The day also coincided with historical moments — the 100th anniversary of the birth of President John F. Kennedy. A wreath was placed at the gravesite of the 35th U.S. president, buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia, alongside hundreds of other veterans.

The cemetery also was visited by the current president, Donald Trump, who laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the annual ceremony there.

In New York City, the military presence had been notable all week, as several thousand sailors, Marines and Coast Guard members were present for Fleet Week New York, ending on the holiday. The ships that brought them were scheduled to leave Tuesday.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio joined active service members and veterans aboard the Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum, a decommissioned aircraft carrier, for its annual commemoration while Gov. Andrew Cuomo marked the day by taking part in multiple parades.

Thousands of motorcyclists took to the streets of Riverside County, east of Los Angeles, for the annual West Coast Thunder ride. The event honors lost service men and women. Quieter commemorations in California included a cemetery walk and community picnic at the Presidio, a park and former military fort in San Francisco.

(See PARADES, A9)

Memorial Day service in Somerset moved inside courthouse

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Only three times in the history of the Somerset Memorial Day Service has it been moved indoors. But it happened on Monday morning again because of poor weather. Nonetheless, the speeches given, music performed and men and women honored made it as impressive an occasion as any that have been held outdoors.

Pamela Tokar-Ickes, the mistress of ceremonies, welcomed the audience that packed into a large courtroom at the Somerset County Courthouse.

"Memorial Day is not a day to honor the living, it is a day for the living to honor the dead and to pause and remember those brave Americans who fought under this banner of freedom but did not return," she said. "It is our civic and moral responsibility to mark this day's importance."

Following her welcome, the Rev. Micaiah Van-Evera of New Life Assembly of God Church in Friedens gave the invocation. "We give thanks for the sacrifice that our friends and family have given here in America," he said.

The Somerset County Hon-



Staff photo by Cody McDevitt

Members of the Somerset Area High School's Marching Band help to kick off the Memorial Day Parade that went down Main Street in Somerset on Monday. The parade followed a service that was held inside the Somerset County Courthouse.

or Guard, Troop 131 Somerset and Troop 152 B.S.A., along with Cub Scout Pack 131 in Somerset and Girl Scout Troop 46112, presented and raised the colors. All the scouting orga-

nizations present led the audience in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. The Somerset Area Senior High School Band performed the National Anthem while standing in the hallway outside the courtroom.

The Somerset Roof Garden Barbershop Chorus sang "Amazing Grace" while sitting in the jury box.

Chris Zanoni, the morning's featured speaker, joked about worrying about the weather on his drive into Somerset before asking veterans at the event to stand up and be applauded.

(See MEMORIAL, A3)

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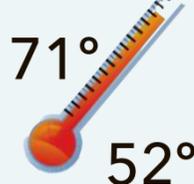
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AREA DEATHS

Margaret R. (Glessner) Bloch, 88, of Pittsburgh
Conrad A. McClintock, 77, of Confluence
Sally M. (Foster)

Miller, 89, formerly of Pinecrest Village near Davidsville
Palma K. (DiFebo) Rice, 88, Meyersdale
Carl A. Perian, 81, of Ligonier

TODAY'S TEMPS



WHAT'S INSIDE

Classifieds **B7** • Comics/Crossword **B10** • Home and Family **A6** • Opinion **A4** • Puzzles **B9** • Sports **B1** • Weather **A10**

INSPIRATION

Jesus immediately said to [his disciples]: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." - Matthew 14:27

Trump honors fallen in Memorial Day address

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is offering the nation's "boundless" gratitude for the ultimate sacrifice paid by Americans in defense of the United States.

Trump dedicated his first Memorial Day address as commander in chief to a Cabinet secretary and two other families who lost loved ones.

The president participated in the somber, annual observance at Arlington National Cemetery. He recounted the stories of Green Beret Capt. Andrew D. Byers

of Colorado Springs and Christopher D. Horton of the Oklahoma National Guard as Byers' tearful parents and Horton's emotional widow looked on.

Parades

(Continued from A1)

In Los Angeles, the Enduring Heroes Memorial sculpture was unveiled to show a combat soldier hoisting the American flag, a monument to service members from the Pasadena area killed in

Iraq, Afghanistan and while fighting terrorism. Arizonans gathered at four veterans cemeteries across the state to honor service members who died in conflicts. The events in Phoenix, Sierra Vista, Marana outside Tucson and at

Camp Navajo near Flagstaff drew hundreds of people. Gov. Doug Ducey issued a statement urging Arizonans to pause from holiday celebrations and remember those whose sacrifices made the day possible.

"They answered the call of duty, dedicated themselves to a higher purpose, and, when the time came, gave what Lincoln called their 'last full measure of devotion,'" Ducey said. "This day is their day, and we are eternally grateful for their sacrifices."



AP photo

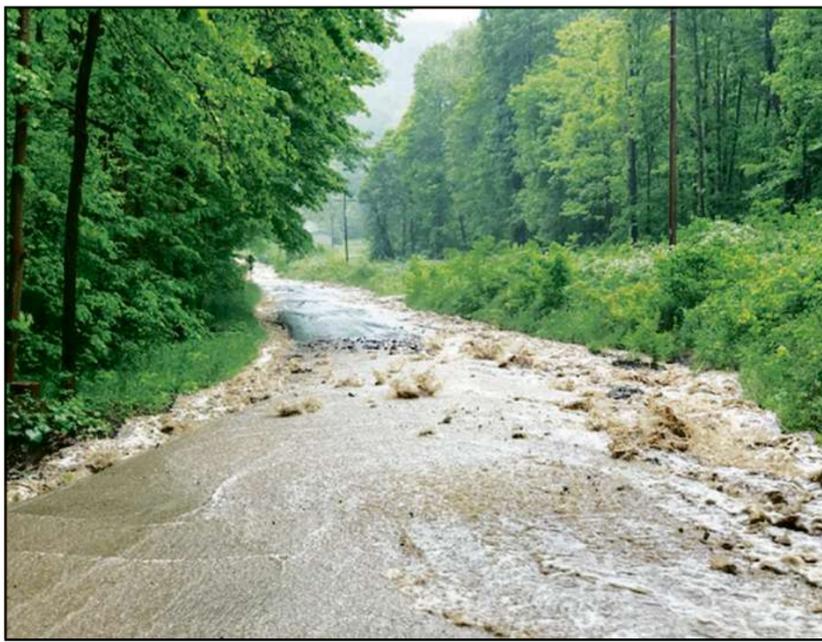
Brittany Jacobs, left, and her 6-year-old son Christian Jacobs meet President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence in Section 60 of Arlington National Cemetery, Monday, in Arlington, Va. Jacob's father, Marine Sgt. Christopher Jacobs, was killed in 2011.

Flooding

(Continued from A1)

Rockwood Assistant Fire Chief Adam Lytle said two homes on Water Street were flooded. Three to four homes on Main Street were also flooded. There was flooding on Piedmont and Bando Roads. Out of the 17 homes that were flooded, three had water to the first floor, approximately five feet deep in each house. The furnaces were ruined along with everything else in the basement. There were about 40 firefighters at the scene, with additional ones arriving from Meyersdale, Garrett and Sipesville and Confluence who Rockwood called to assist.

"It was really bad. Bridge Street was impassable," Lytle said. "We shut it down for three to



Submitted photo

Ream Road in Middlecreek Township from Sunday evening's rain storm. Penn DOT was dispatched by 7:30 p.m. to clean up the debris. Residents outside of town flooding. We had to call in multiple fire departments

to assist us."

No one was reported hurt or injured in Rockwood.

High water was reported in Laurel Hill State and storm waters rushed down Route 653 into the center of Rockwood. High waters were also rushing through Barronvale in Middlecreek Township.

Fire departments across the county were at work in the flooded region. Listie firefighters notified County Control to tell CSX officials to not allow trains through until they cleared the crossing at Listie Road, according to Listie Fire Chief Scott Yachere. It wasn't the only emergency they responded to.

"We had a good bit of flooding. We had debris all over the CSX tracks, several flooded basements and a rescue out of

a mobile home," Yachere said. "Water surrounded it, and the person was inside. We backed the pickup through the water to the back of the steps and loaded him."

The New Centerville & Rural Volunteer Fire Company closed several roads throughout three townships, according to New Centerville Fire Chief Randy Younkin. On Copper Kettle Highway, they dealt with extensive damage done to a bridge and a big culver pipe that washed up on the roads. Younkin said that two homes flooded, with waters reaching above the furnaces.

Somerset Fire Chief Mike Livengood could not be reached for comment. Nor could Somerset Borough Manager Michelle Enos regarding the situation in the county seat.

Reclamation

(Continued from A1)

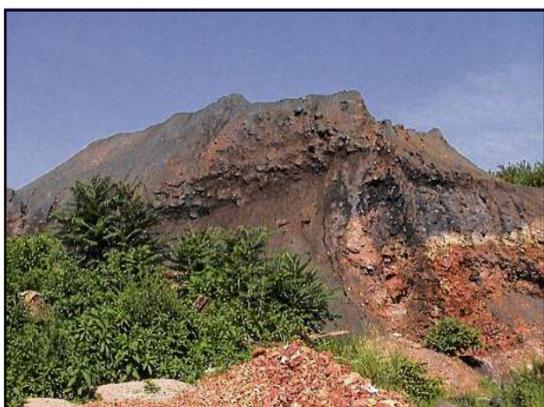
That organization wants to replace all coal energy with wind, solar and geothermal sources. The Sierra Club is generally opposed to burning waste coal because it substitutes one form of pollution for another, according to Tom Schuster, a Windber-based senior campaign representative for the organization.

"It does help clean up acid mine drainage, but it creates toxic air pollution in the form of mercury, sulfur dioxide, smog-causing nitrogen oxides, acid gasses, as well as carbon dioxide that contributes to climate disruption. Furthermore, the coal ash that is placed back at the original site contains heavy metals and other pollution that can leach into the water, even though it is not as visible as the orange acid mine drainage."

Schuster said there wasn't a conflict between national and state environmental leaders over the issue.

"I don't believe there is a conflict so much as a difference in priorities. We recognize there are some environmental benefits to removing waste coal piles, but there are trade offs when you burn them. At minimum, the waste coal plants need to comply with existing air quality standards, and many currently do not. They should not get a free pass."

The issue is making headlines nationally. This year, the National Geographic Channel will air a documentary called "From the Ashes," which premiered at Tribeca Film Festival in New York City in April. According to their website, the film captures the economic struggles with in places like Somerset and Cambria counties that were heavily reliant on the coal sector. In the trailer for the film, it also mentions concerns about both water and global warming. The film premieres in theaters on



Submitted photo

Remnants from the coal mining done at a site in Pennsylvania. Coal refuse can be burned with new technology at some power plants that also lower the amount of carbon emissions. Coal energy remains controversial however with people concerned about its contributions to global warming.

June 25. It will air globally in 171 countries later this year on the National Geographic network.

"From the Ashes is an important documentary that underscores one of the most dominant and controversial industries in the history of the United States," said Courtney Monroe, National Geographic Global Networks CEO. "The film explores the reality of coal's role in climate change while offering insight

into solutions that could help revive the struggling economies of dying mining towns and still safeguard the environment."

Waste coal is a costly problem for Pennsylvania. McAllister said it would cost the state roughly \$14 billion to solve the problem.

John Dryzal, district manager for the Cambria County Conservation District, echoed McAllister's views.

"We have a lot of coal

piles throughout our county," Dryzal said. "You have the acid runoff from the piles that get into the waterways and lower the pH of the water. Many of our waterways are impaired due to the mine issue."

There are three co-generation plants in Cambria County using reclaimed coal. Northern Star Generation in Cambria Township is one. Colver Power Plant is another, and Ebensburg Power Co. is the third.

George Ellis, executive director of the Anthracite Region Independent Power Producers Association, said the coal power plants scattered throughout Pennsylvania have reduced the issue since the energy sector developed ways to burn ash coal.

"We remove the coal waste from the site and transfer it to the plant, burn the refuse, generate electricity and then the ash from the generation process is a beneficially used ash that is good for reclamation," Ellis said. "We take that and reclaim the site where the coal was removed. All at no cost to the taxpayers."

Since new technology became available to the coal energy sector in the 1980s that permitted them to burn coal refuse, the state's coal-refuse-to-energy plants are impaired due to the mine issue. They say in the report that 7,000 acres of land has been reclaimed in more than two decades of operation.

According to his organization's report, there are 840 piles of coal refuse, low quality coal and other material discarded by original mining operations, scattered across the Commonwealth's anthracite and bituminous regions. The state possesses neither the fiscal capacity nor the capability to address these piles and their attendant environmental and safety hazards in a complete and holistic fashion, according to them.

Ellis said though a great deal of progress had been made regarding the coal piles, there is a long way to go before it is completely eliminated.

"The volume of the remaining coal refuse piles is daunting," Ellis said. "These piles are more prone to erosion, and even fires. They ignite. If these piles are not removed through our work, in all likelihood they'll remain in the place. They must be removed."

Missy Reckner thinks the co-generation plants that burn more recent coal and the reclaimed coal from refuse piles are a good option as well. She is the director of the Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team, a program affiliated with the Conemaugh Valley Conservancy that aims to educate an engage people to maintain, enhance and restore the natural resources of the Kiski-Conemaugh River Basin.

"There is a benefit to go back and collect what is burnable and that can create a highly alkaline material that will help offset any acidity coming off from the mine," Reckner said. "I believe technology exists to keep our emissions lower than they were. But power companies also fight that. It's a tough nut for sure."

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