



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 9, 2026

Economic Revitalization of Communities with Abandoned Mines to Be Highlighted at GRADD March Board Meeting

OWENSBORO, Ky. — The Green River Area Development District (GRADD) will welcome representatives from the **Abandoned Mine Lands Economic Revitalization (AMLER) Program** as the featured speakers for its March 11 Board of Directors meeting. The meeting will take place at **10:30 a.m. in the GRADD boardroom.**

The AMLER Program provides an opportunity for communities that once depended on coal to pursue economic and community development projects on former mine lands impacted by the decline of coal production. Through the program, funding can be used to design, develop, and construct projects that encourage job creation, infrastructure improvements, and tourism development.

Representatives with the Abandoned Mine Lands Economic Revitalization (AMLER) Program say they are looking forward to engaging with regional leaders during the meeting.

“We look forward to meeting with the Green River Area Development District, providing an overview of the AMLER program, answering any questions the board may have and working with the community to support potential projects in the future.”

In 2016, \$30 million in U.S. Treasury funding was awarded to three Appalachian state Abandoned Mine Land programs: Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. This is due to their high number of unfunded, classified Priority 1 and Priority 2 coal-related abandoned mine land hazards, the most serious safety risks to the public. Kentucky’s AML program established a competitive grant process, guided by the federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE), to distribute those funds to local projects.

Kentucky communities are already seeing how AMLER investments can support economic growth and community revitalization.

In **Greenup County**, the **Aviation STEM Career Training Initiative** used AMLER funding to purchase aircraft equipment and flight simulators, develop classroom materials, and hire personnel to train a future workforce in aviation-related careers.

In **Boyd County**, the **City of Ashland Conference Center**, a planned 30,000-square-foot facility, received \$2 million for technology infrastructure, furnishings, and related park improvements. The project is expected to create nearly 200 jobs and increase tourism spending by more than \$500,000 within five years of completion.

County officials say programs like AMLER highlight how reclamation of abandoned mine lands can be paired with long-term economic development opportunities for affected communities.

“Since the AMLER funding was first instituted in 2016, we in Western Kentucky have lobbied hard to have the opportunity to apply. For the past 10 years, Kentucky has been one of the most funded states because of the overall unmet need in reclamation of hazardous mined out areas,” says **Webster County Judge/Executive Steve Henry**. I applaud Congressman Comer for getting the language into the federal budget to make this happen. These funds are meant to help coal communities with economic growth. We have several projects here in Webster County that we plan on applying for going forward.”

The GRADD Board of Directors meeting is open to the public.

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The Green River Area Development District (GRADD) is a regional planning agency and council of governments serving the communities of Daviess, Hancock, Henderson, McLean, Ohio, Union, and Webster counties. GRADD offers assistance in the fields of aging, health, and social services; community and economic development; transportation planning; and workforce development. Our mission is to afford local governments and citizens a regional forum to identify issues and opportunities, and to provide leadership in planning and implementing programs to improve the quality of life in our district.

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