



# Alabama Department of Labor Alabama Career Center System PRESS RELEASE



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## **\$10 Million in Abandoned Mine Lands Pilot Grants Announced for Economic Development and Job Creation in Alabama's Coalfield Region**

MONTGOMERY - Fitzgerald Washington, Alabama Secretary of Labor, and the Alabama Department of Labor (ADOL) Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) Program announced today that Alabama has been given approval to distribute \$10 million in federal grant funds to three selected applicants to spur economic development and job creation in Northern Alabama. The grant will apply to three projects.

The three applicants were recommended for selection by the AML Program and approved by the federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE), as part of the 2017 AML Pilot Program to revitalize Alabama's coalfields region.

United States Steel Corporation (U.S. Steel) in conjunction with the City of Birmingham, the Southern Museum of Flight, Jefferson County, and the City of Leeds have been given preliminary approval to receive \$6 million of the 2017 AML Pilot grant funds towards the development of its Grand River Technology Park and Grand River Homes. The Grand River Technology Park represents a multiphase opportunity to reclaim and transform approximately 105 acres of undeveloped land surrounding and including many pre-1977 abandoned coal mine lands in east Jefferson County into a regional nexus for research and development, tourism, and light manufacturing. The Grand River Homes (Residential Phase) is both supportive and derivative of the Technology Park, making the Park more attractive to potential park tenants / employers and serving a recognized need in the area. The initial assessment of this project conservatively estimates that 1,200 new employment opportunities with the potential to generate over \$85 million impact in the Greater Birmingham Metropolitan area would be achieved.

Also announced was preliminary approval for \$3.25 million in 2017 AML Pilot grant funds to U.S. Steel in partnership with the City of Helena, the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, and the Alabama Department of Environmental Management toward the development of its Hillsboro Community. The Hillsboro Community is a multi-phase mixed use development that will occur on a 3,600-acre tract, portions of which are situated on an area of pre-1977 abandoned coal mine lands. The 3,600-acre tract of land is planned to include residential, commercial, lake and trail system areas, and parks, each of which will be connected by an integrated trail system running the length of the project and ultimately linking it to downtown Helena. Once completed, it is estimated that the Hillsboro Community Project would contribute approximately \$67.1 million annually in spending and support 495 jobs with related new income of \$23.8 million in Shelby County.

Finally, it was also announced that the City of Vestavia Hills has received preliminary approval for \$750,000 in 2017 AML Pilot program grant funds for additions and improvements to the Sicard Hollow Athletic Complex, portions of which are situated on 65-acres of previously reclaimed abandoned mine lands. These improvements would include construction of a 300-seat amphitheater with covered stage, a 50-person pavilion building, public wi-fi access, the installation of a turn lane on Sicard Hollow Road, expansion of parking facilities, and the

addition of a multi-purpose athletic court. Impacts from this project are anticipated to create 1,000 jobs due to the attraction of approximately eight to ten newly created businesses and over 100 existing served or improved businesses to service the demand for restaurant, retail, and hotel amenities.

Work on the projects is expected to begin by summer 2018.

“We are committed to putting Alabamians to work,” said Secretary Washington. “We also have a commitment to ensure that any abandoned coal mine sites are reclaimed and made safe. These grants allow us to do both.

We are looking forward to the investment and progress that these grants will bring to North Alabama.”

“We are actively investing in the revival of coal country by presenting new pathways of opportunity for job creation, tourism, and innovation across the region,” said Chuck Williams, State Mine Land Reclamation Supervisor, who is also advocating for continued federal funding for the AML Pilot Program in 2018. “This program allows for the removal of extreme safety hazards associated with many of our abandoned coal mine sites, while simultaneously transforming these sites into useful infrastructure for the employment of individuals and betterment of communities that have been impacted by the downturn in coal mining.”

The AML Pilot Project is a joint effort by the U.S. Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, and the State of Alabama Department of Labor’s Abandoned Mine Lands Program.

*The Alabama Department of Labor / The Alabama Career Center System is a partner in Alabama Works, Alabama’s unified workforce system.*

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