

Community Fact Sheet

Lehigh Gap Site

Slope Stabilization Project Update

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

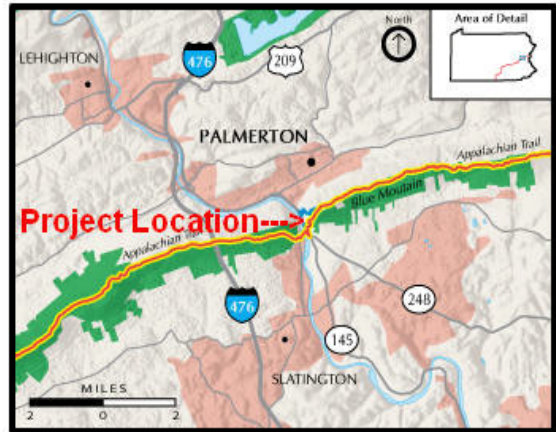
Appalachian National Scenic Trail
May 2010



PROJECT SUMMARY

Using American Reinvestment and Recovery Act funding, the National Park Service (NPS), in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is implementing an engineered slope stabilization project along the Appalachian National Scenic Trail near Palmerton, Pennsylvania, on the east side of Lehigh Gap.

The Lehigh Gap Site was contaminated, defoliated, and destabilized by historic smelter emissions that emitted tons of zinc, lead, cadmium, and sulfur dioxide plumes into the atmosphere. The Lehigh Gap project is a response action under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA, also known as Superfund) to abate the ongoing migration of contaminated soil and water from the Site, abate the threat to public safety from a potential rockfall at the Site, and ensure the long-term success of future revegetation efforts for the Site planned in the context of the Palmerton Zinc Pile National Priorities List (NPL) Site remedial action.



Starting in June 2010, and proceeding through approximately April 2011, contractors will be on-site to implement the Lehigh Gap project using a variety of engineering techniques such as installation of gabions, rock bolts, shotcrete buttresses, drapes, and fences.

The Appalachian Trail will remain open for the duration of the project. However, to ensure the safety of visitors, the blue-blazed Winter Trail (sometimes used by hikers to get to the town of Palmerton) will be closed during the project because it will be the primary project access for the contractor and an active construction zone. Please plan accordingly when visiting the area and be alert to construction activities. Regular updates will be posted at the following website: www.appalachiantrail.org/updates.

PROJECT HISTORY

The Appalachian Trail, on its 2,175 mile-long traverse of the Appalachian Mountains, passes through a portion of the Palmerton NPL Site. The Palmerton NPL Site, comprising thousands of acres, was contaminated by the discharge of hazardous substances from the operation of two nearby zinc smelters that emitted tons of zinc, lead, cadmium, and sulfur dioxide plumes into the atmosphere. Approximately 800 acres within the Palmerton NPL Site are parklands managed by the NPS, including a 71-acre area known as the Lehigh Gap Site. The contaminant-related loss of trees and other vegetative cover at the Lehigh Gap Site has led to significant erosion, enabling the on-going migration of contaminated soil and water from the Site. It has also eliminated natural barriers to rock falls, creating a potentially hazardous situation to motorists passing below on PA Route 248 and to trail visitors and workers.



The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the agency responsible for the Palmerton NPL Site cleanup. EPA has future plans to revegetate some areas, including the Lehigh Gap Site, by application of a mixture of seed, fertilizer, and lime. To complement this application, NPS will implement engineered slope stabilization measures prior to revegetation.



NPS performed a modeling of potential rockfall events, enlisted the FHWA to perform a technical review of potential slope stabilization measures, and, in the context of a CERCLA Removal Site Evaluation, reviewed existing background information about the

Lehigh Gap Site and the ongoing migration of hazardous substances from the Site. With this information in hand, NPS determined that current Site conditions present an immediate and unacceptable threat to public health, welfare, and the environment and that a CERCLA time-critical removal action is appropriate. In early 2010, design and specification documents were completed by FHWA and the project was advertised for competitive bid. The contractor will be selected by mid-May 2010, with work anticipated to start in mid-June 2010.

AND NOW FOR YOUR PART

Community involvement is an important factor in the CERCLA process. The public will have the opportunity to review and comment on the administrative record file, which contains documents upon which the selection of the Lehigh Gap Site project has been based. This record is anticipated to become available in June for public review at the following locations:

Palmerton Area Library
402 Delaware Avenue
Palmerton, PA 18071
Phone: (610) 826-3424
Hours: Mon & Tues: 10am-8pm;
Wed., Thurs., & Fri.: 10am-5pm;
Sat. 9am-4pm

National Park Service
1050 Walnut Street, Suite 220
Boulder, Colorado 80302
Contact: Greg Nottingham
Phone: (303) 415-1483
Mon.-Fri. 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you have questions concerning the Lehigh Gap Site project or information contained in this fact sheet, please contact David Reus, at (304) 535-4001, via e-mail at david_reus@nps.gov, or in writing to Appalachian National Scenic Trail, P.O. Box 50, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425.