

From: **Whittaker, Frank M** <[frank.m.whittaker@wv.gov](mailto:frank.m.whittaker@wv.gov)>  
Date: Fri, Oct 27, 2023 at 10:02 AM  
Subject: Re: Belcher Hollow UMF - AML Emergency  
To: Hincks, Steven J <[steven.j.hincks@wv.gov](mailto:steven.j.hincks@wv.gov)>  
Cc: B J Chestnut <[b.j.chestnut@wv.gov](mailto:b.j.chestnut@wv.gov)>, Christopher T Matkins <[christopher.t.matkins@wv.gov](mailto:christopher.t.matkins@wv.gov)>, Hager III, Joseph E <[joseph.e.hageriii@wv.gov](mailto:joseph.e.hageriii@wv.gov)>, Totten, Mark L <[mark.l.totten@wv.gov](mailto:mark.l.totten@wv.gov)>

Mr. Hinks

Your request to contract with the Thrasher Group for the Belcher Hollow UMF – (Underground Mine Fire) Emergency Reclamation Project in Kanawha County is approved. Please follow all procedures outlined in the Purchasing Division Procedures Handbook.

On Fri, Oct 27, 2023 at 9:32 AM Hincks, Steven J <[steven.j.hincks@wv.gov](mailto:steven.j.hincks@wv.gov)> wrote:  
Please see attached Purchasing Memo w Prof Services for the proposed AML Emergency Project, Belcher Hollow Underground Mine Fire (UMF).

Please let me know if you have any questions,

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**Steven Hincks**

**West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection**

Abandoned Mine Lands Division

Southern Emergency Administrator, ERSS

**Office: 304.926.0449 Cell: 304.993.5590**

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**Frank Whittaker, CPPB, NIGP-CPP**

Assistant Director

West Virginia Purchasing Division

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west virginia department of environmental protection

Office of Abandoned Mine Lands  
1159 Nick Rahall Greenway  
Fayetteville, WV 25840  
Telephone (304) 574-4465

Harold D. Ward, Cabinet Secretary  
dep.wv.gov

## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Frank Whittaker, Assistant Director  
Acquisition & Contract Administration Section  
Purchasing Division

BJ Chestnut, Assistant Chief  
Business Operations Office - Administrative Services

**FROM:** Steven Hincks, Emergency Administrator,  
Abandoned Mine Lands and Reclamation

**DATE:** October 26, 2023

**SUBJECT:** Belcher Hollow UMF – (Underground Mine Fire)  
Emergency Reclamation Project – Kanawha County

AML received a complaint, (2023-SOU-039-090) on 8/20/2023. This complaint was forwarded by Special Reclamation. The Special Rec inspector was on his way to a site when they noticed one section of highwall had been burning and had subsequently collapsed from the fire exposure. Smoke was exiting the collapsed highwall. AML was called to investigate the site on 8/21/2023. At the initial site visit, it was noted the underground mine fire was not only burning at the face of the highwall, but also had burned the leaf litter and underbrush above the area as well. The underground mine fire has continued to burn causing fractures in the highwall rock face. The fracturing of the rock has caused this area to become very unstable and could potentially create a dangerous slide onto the road. The combination of the unstable highwall and the continued threat of fire, both underground and throughout the forest, have made this area an extreme danger to health and human safety.

AML has determined the underground mine fire is in the underground mining of the Union Carbide, Morris Fork No. 5 & 6, in the 5 Block Coal Seam. The Union Carbide, Morris Fork No. 5 & 6 mines last were in production in 1973, making them eligible for the pre-law Abandoned Mine Lands program.

AML Emergency staff returned to this site on 10/19/2023. The fire has collapsed the rock face in an area of approximately 50' x 200'. The fire has caused the rock face to subside approximately 6-10'. The fire is located about 10' off the existing haul road. The sudden occurrence of this fire, as well as the adjacency to extensive underground mine workings is cause for concern. There is potential for this fire to spread underground into the workings. This would make it difficult to

Promoting a healthy environment.

contain if it was to continue to burn. The area is heavily utilized by ATV riders as well as gas and oil production. The surface temperature of the venting areas was in excess of 450°. Based on the description of this area exploratory drilling is needed to establish the limits of the fire.

The sudden occurrence of this underground mine fire has made this area an extreme danger to health and human safety. It is recommended that the underground mine fire reclamation is approved for AML Emergency funding. The UMF must be addressed immediately. Failure to address the fire as an emergency will likely cause additional damage to this area as the underground mine fire continues to progress.

Due to the scope of the project, the required design services to abate the problems at the site will have to be performed by an outside engineering firm. In accordance with section 5G-1-4 of the State Code of West Virginia, since special circumstances exist and the cost of the project is to be less than \$250,000, I have the opinion to select an architectural/engineering firm on the basis of satisfactory performance and knowledge of the agency's needs. The Thrasher Group has been selected to perform the engineering design for the project. The estimate for these professional services are not expected to exceed \$80,000.00. The estimated cost of the site reclamation portion of the project should not exceed \$170,000.00.

Please contact me at 304-993-5590 if you have any questions.

Steven Hincks  
Southern Emergency Administrator  
Office of Abandoned Mine Lands and Reclamation

Cc: file

**Steve  
Hincks**

Digitally signed by: Steve  
Hincks  
DN: CN = Steve Hincks email  
= steven.j.hincks@wv.gov C  
= AD O = AML OU = DLR  
Date: 2023.10.27 09:31:16 -  
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