



Press Release

For Immediate Release
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Contact: Lucas Martsof, Township Manager
Phone: 814-742-7361
E-mail: lmartsof@antistownship.org

The Antis Township Board of Supervisors authorized a solicitation for bids at their September meeting to remediate a coal waste pile on a 50.85 acre parcel it purchased in November 2017.

Research by township staff a year and a half after the purchase discovered that approximately 20 acres of the parcel along Kerbaugh Road had been used as a coal transfer, storage and processing facility. The coal processing waste and ash had accumulated on the site during several decades as the headquarters for the H. S. Kerbaugh, Inc. and later as the National Steel Construction company. The company began operation in the late 1800s and continued through at least the late 1920s.

News archives and local historic accounts would indicate that the facility encompassed much of the land from Becker Road to the current electrical transmission line plant (where remnants of the company's dam remain). The waste material is toward the southern end of the parcel, appearing as a dark-soiled hillside next to the railroad tracks.

Though decades of tree growth have stabilized the hill, remediation of the site at this time seemed prudent to the supervisors. Technological advances in waste coal utilization have made recovery of the material attractive over the last quarter century. But profound changes in the coal industry overall may mean that the window of opportunity to utilize waste coal plants for such materials may be passing. Supervisors, therefore, wanted to explore such an option while it still existed. If it turns out it is not economically feasible and no one makes a proposal, the hillside will remain a tree covered edge to the new trail. If the waste is removed, the existing timber will first be harvested. After excavation, the site will be graded and replanted, either with trees or as active park and recreation land.

Preliminary testing indicates the material is low in sulfur and has sufficient BTU levels to make it attractive to energy producers at regional cogeneration facilities. If trucking costs to the facilities are reasonable, the township anticipates royalty payments for the energy value of the material.

"This may be a great opportunity for the township to cleanup a potential environmental liability and generate some income to help fund our much-anticipated park and trail work," said Antis Township manager Lucas Martsof. "If it doesn't work out, we still have a beautiful tree-covered hillside. We can't lose." Supervisors and staff have moved forward carefully and deliberately, learning from the experiences of other communities that have undertaken such work. "We wanted to be sure we were moving forward in the best interests of both the township residents and the environment."

Proposals are due on November 1st and township officials hope work could begin as soon as permitting work is completed and weather allows.

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