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## **DCNR, DEP Officials Dedicate Renovated, Reopened ATV Trail Popular With Riders in Sproul State Forest**

**Westport, Clinton County** - Representatives of the departments of Conservation and Natural Resources and Environmental Protection today joined local officials and ATV riding enthusiasts in officially reopening a popular, public ATV trail threading through Sproul State Forest near Westport, Clinton County.

“ATV riding enthusiasts drawn to this popular trail have been most patient as a serious acid mine drainage issue was addressed,” said DCNR Deputy Secretary of Parks and Forests John Norbeck. “This two and one-half year project was a ‘win-win’ for both the Susquehanna River watershed and the riders who will appreciate the work that has gone into the trail before its reopening.”

Today’s ceremonies marked the end of a large-scale acid mine remediation project on Whiskey Springs ATV Trail that required closing the 45-mile trail for almost two and one-half years. Riders were welcomed back to sample completed rehabilitation work, including erosion and sedimentation controls and surface restoration on the trail, which reopened May 27.

“Safety of all concerned was the driving force in the decision to close the entire trail,” Norbeck said. “The contractor had noted as many as 40 to 50 large trucks a day could be traveling on roads to and from the job site. In addition there were operational efficiency and job site security issues to be considered.”

The trail was closed in early September 2013, and construction began the next day on the \$12.2 million Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) project, covering 100 acres in Leidy and Noyes townships. The Huling Branch reclamation effort was designed to reduce acid mine drainage and eliminate public health and safety concerns related to dangerous high walls.

“Originally, we had hoped to keep the western half of the Whiskey Springs ATV trail open during the project,” said Norbeck, “However, after meeting with the contractor, DEP and local officials, it was evident heavy truck and equipment traffic and the construction work would require a complete closure.

“We thank the Clinton County Commissioners and township officials for their input and support of the project, and we look forward to working with them in future.”

The Huling Branch work included backfilling of about 6,000 linear feet of dangerous high wall, 40- to 70-feet high, and one adjacent spoil area. The spoil material was graded into the pits to return the surface mine site to its original contour.

“This project is a success story – reclaiming dangerous abandoned minelands and returning them to a use that benefits the community,” said DEP Executive Deputy Secretary John Stefanko. “In addition to reopening the Whiskey Springs ATV trail and adding new trail and features, this project also improved the water quality in nearby Kettle Creek and planted over 100 American chestnut trees.”

“Closing Whiskey Springs better enabled us to complete needed trail rehabilitation work, such as improved erosion and sedimentation controls and trail surface restoration,” Norbeck said. “Also, the remediation effort resulted in reconstruction of about 8,500 feet of the trail. About 55 acres were re-vegetated with 48,150 tree seedlings, and an additional 47 acres were re-vegetated with wildlife habitat grasses”

During the closure, DCNR offered the nearby Bloody Skillet ATV Trail as an alternative for ATV enthusiasts, as it offered a similar riding experience. Also, the Denton Hill ATV Trail System, located 45 minutes to the north, was another alternative.

One of 11 ATV trails on state forestlands across the state, Whiskey Springs stretches 45 miles through Sproul State Forest, beginning near Westport. The 305,450-acre forest is also home to the nearby 39-mile Bloody Skillet ATV Trail.

The project used more than \$756,000 in Growing Greener funding to implement a source remediation plan aimed at reducing acid mine drainage pollution originating from the site. The money was used to purchase 370,000 tons of alkaline material to neutralize highly acidic mine spoil, including about 15,000 tons of coal refuse material improperly placed within pit areas throughout the site.

Also, about 137,000 tons of crop coal around the perimeter of the reclamation area were removed, along with 17,500 tons of buried coal refuse.

New trail maps and brochures for Whiskey Springs are available at DCNR’s website, [www.DCNR.pa.gov](http://www.DCNR.pa.gov).

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Terry Brady, 717-705-2225; [tbrady@pa.gov](mailto:tbrady@pa.gov).

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