



# COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

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## Lonesome Pine Regional Industrial Facilities Authority Receives \$2.5 Million for Project Thoroughbred Facility on Abandoned Mine Land

**Norton, Va.** – It once was a site where coal was stored and loaded on trains to be sent to market. Now, grains grown by Appalachian farmers will be stored at the site in Norton before being sent to the craft beverage market. The Lonesome Pine Regional Industrial Facilities Authority (RIFA) received \$2.5 million from the Virginia Department of Energy’s (Virginia Energy) Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization (AMLER) grant program for Project Thoroughbred.

“It’s great to see how our agricultural sector in Southwest Virginia will benefit from the redevelopment of an abandoned coal loadout facility,” **said U.S. Representative Morgan Griffith.** “The funds awarded to Project Thoroughbred will allow for the development of a Southwest grain terminal, positively impacting the agriculture base and craft beverage industry in the region.”

“Two of the industries that Southwest Virginia is built on are coming together in Project Thoroughbred,” **said Virginia Energy Deputy Director Will Clear.** “An old coal loadout facility is getting a new life and Virginia’s farmers are gaining a new opportunity in growing these specialty grains.”

Project Thoroughbred will reclaim the historic coal loading facility into a grain processing, storage and distribution terminal. This facility will allow local farmers to expand their growing season and bring in more income. Specialty grains sell at a rate of 30-percent more per bushel than feed quality grains.

“This regional grain terminal is essential to Southwest Virginia’s plan to capitalize on the craft beverage industry’s need for locally sourced specialty grains,” **said Appalachian**

**Grains founder Will Payne.** “Aggregating the region’s grain at this facility will not only give our farmers confidence that there is a market but allow us to scale production to meet growing industry demands.”

Appalachian Grains is selling and marketing the grain grown in Southwest Virginia counties. Because most of these specialty grains are imported from out of state, locally sourcing the product greatly reduces food miles, costs and carbon footprint. With the distribution facility located in Norton, it will serve as a central location from which malt producers, breweries and distilleries throughout the Southeast United States will source specialty grains.

Project Thoroughbred also creates an ongoing workforce training program at Mountain Empire Community College. Working with the growers to set the curriculum and offering internships at the terminal, students will leave with a grains certification to be able to continue their career as more grains are grown to meet demand.

The AMLER program originated in a federal omnibus bill in 2017, Virginia Energy has received \$10 million annually for economic development on abandoned mine lands. The program is administered by the Office of Surface Mining and Reclamation Enforcement. The grants are managed by Virginia Energy’s Abandoned Mine Land (AML) program.

[Virginia Energy’s AML program](#) was created in 1981 and is federally funded to reclaim issues left behind by coal mining that occurred before 1977. Funding has been limited in the past meaning only the highest priority problems were able to be reclaimed. The projects were a safety threat to residents or had a significant negative environmental impact.