



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WVDEP investigating blowout at former T&T Mine

ALBRIGHT, W. Va. (March 5, 2021) – The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP) is currently investigating a blowout from the former T&T Mine Complex that is discharging into the confluence of Muddy Creek and the Cheat River in Preston County.

Large amounts of highly acidic water, 10 times that of normal concentrations, and sediment is discharging from the former mine and has caused acid levels in Muddy Creek and the Cheat River to spike. The flow peaked at 6,200 gallons per minute Thursday afternoon, but has since dropped to 3,500 gallons per minute.

The incident has since been reported to the agency's spill line.

Thursday's event overwhelmed the WVDEP's acid mine drainage (AMD) treatment system, known as the T&T Treatment Facility, causing a pipeline entering a manhole to rupture. An estimated 300-500 gallons per minute was not going into the treatment facility.

Staff from the WVDEP's Office of Special Reclamation are on site to investigate and implement a repair plan.

"The flow has to decrease to where we can shut off the valves that regulate the water out of the T&T mine," said WVDEP's Acting Communications Director Terry Fletcher. "This would cause water to build up in the mine and allow our staff time to make repairs at the manhole and better assess the situation."

Similar events have happened on three occasions since the initial blowouts at the T&T mine in 1994 and 1995, which overwhelmed previous AMD treatment systems. These events prompted the WVDEP to install the new, innovative T&T Treatment Facility, which treats up to 6 million gallons of AMD per day.

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The WVDEP has yet to determine the cause of Thursday's event, or prior events. There is speculation that periodic roof collapses within the T&T mine is displacing large volumes of highly acidic water at one time, but the agency has not been able to confirm this theory. Additionally, significant amounts of rainfall in recent days likely increased the volume of water in the mine and contributed to the current situation.

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