



Boone County tree planting project ramping up

Project coordinators are searching for volunteers

By Amelia A. Pridemore

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A group of volunteers will soon work to reclaim an old Boone County mining site — by together planting 5,000 trees.

March 27, volunteers will descend at an old mining site outside Prenter near Van High School, where they will plant the trees on an eight-acre site between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. — six hours' time, according to Jessica Vierling, outreach coordinator for the Appalachian Coal Country Watershed Team.

A second tree-planting project was originally scheduled for March 28 in Mullens, but Vierling said that event has been postponed. A new date has not been chosen.

The ACCWT is a partnership among the Office of Surface Mining, AmeriCorps VISTA and the Citizens Conservation Corps of West Virginia, according to a release. It places volunteers with community groups in an eight-state region and undertakes such activities as providing environmental education activities, promoting community revitalization and economic redevelopment.

The nonprofit organization has partnered with the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative to replant in 741,000 acres of Appalachian mine land sites currently in a grassland state. The goal is to restore forests in those areas.

Patriot Coal Company purchased and donated the trees, Vierling said.

Vierling said this will not only restore the sites' original ecosystems and wildlife habitats. She also noted grassland is not as beneficial as a forest. More species can use the land, and trees filtering drainage can improve water quality.

Although Vierling believes there will be enough people on hand to plant the trees, she said other materials, workers or financial supporters are needed. This includes food and people to serve it, registration workers and someone to sponsor a portable toilet.

"Any amount helps — whether it be donating food or getting the Porta Potti up there," she said. "We can all work as a team to help better the area."

For more information about the event, interested people are encouraged to call Vierling at 304-461-3132.