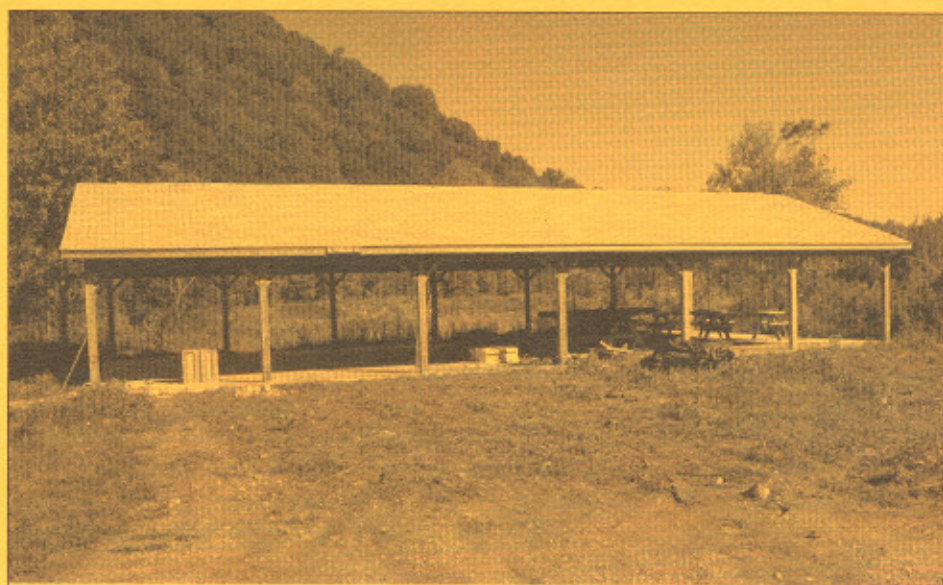


Be prepared to see a lot more activity going on at the AMD&ART Park in Vintondale in the up-coming months. There was a lot going on these past months and the work continues. At the end of October new trees were planted to replace the ones lost in this summer's drought. Thank you to all those who generously donated their time to replant the Litmus Garden. In order to make the sight more "user-friendly" weirs will be placed between several of the treatment ponds to enhance measurement and understanding. Our hope is that anyone interested will come and measure the water flow on sight, but do not be surprised if you see something moving in the water since minnows have been placed in all existing bodies of water on site to control potential mosquito larvae. Along with the weirs will be small interpretive signs to identify tree species in the Litmus Garden and the Nature Trail. These features can be utilized by visiting school groups and educational workshops. If you are interested in helping with any site project, contact Bethany at 814-749-7552, 814-539-5357, or write to [amdandart@amdandart.org](mailto:amdandart@amdandart.org).



Newly completed AMD&ART Park recreational pavilion. Completed with the generous help of the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 23.

## Education Center Open for Business!

This past summer the education center was thoroughly cleaned and put in order by summer intern Laura Thomas. The new Education Coordinator, George M. Turner Jr. is busy putting the finishing touches to the center. Bookshelves are being filled, pictures hung and preparations made to accommodate visiting students and educators. The education center is available to assist area teachers with their lesson plans and give students more "hands on" learning. We also will host training weekends for area schoolteachers to gather and discuss how they can best utilize the education center and site. The education center is a great way to take children out of the classroom and let them experience science at work in the world. Science is not the limit, however, art and humanities classes are also encouraged to come out to the site and learn how to take art and humanities out of a studio and classroom setting and into the environment. If you are interested in taking advantage of this great opportunity in your school contact George Turner by telephone at 814-749-7552, 814-539-5357 or e-mail him at [amdandart@amdandart.org](mailto:amdandart@amdandart.org) Atten George.



This summer OSM intern Stephanie Troyan was hired for the specific task of creating an interpretive plan of the Vintondale reclamation site.

Not only did she design a comprehensive updated site map, but she also designed several more specific maps for different areas on site. The "Celebration Point" map will be sent out to design students across coal country for a competition to design an appropriate memorial for the point where the treated acid mine drainage re-enters the Blacklick. AMD&ART would like to thank the Office of Surface Mining and Stephanie for all their help.



AMD&ART Staff, left to right: Founder: Allan Comp, AmeriCorps: Emily Ruby, Roman Chiu, George Turner, Bethany James

## AMD&ART Welcomes New Staff

This September three new AmeriCorps volunteers joined the AMD&ART team. The new team members represent AMD&ART's commitment to an interdisciplinary approach to AMD treatment. Bethany James, a biologist, came all the way from Kansas to be the new Site Coordinator. She is a recent graduate of Benedictine College with a bachelor's degree in biology. Over the summer Bethany spent her time maintaining 1,100 acres of upland prairies and marshes in Eastern Kansas, while also researching plant biodiversity in Atchison, Kansas. She will be working hard to put the finishing touches on the AMD&ART Park in Vintondale, and she is always eager to have volunteer help.

George Turner joins the

team as the AMD&ART Park Education Center Coordinator. He received his bachelor of fine arts in painting from the Savannah College of Art and Design. As the new Education Coordinator he will put his artistic skills to work reaching out to teachers across the region. He is anxious to talk to area teachers and learn how he can involve the Education Center in their curriculum. This past year George spent his time working at Adelphoi Village's Greystone house, a home for troubled youth located in Jennerstown.

The third AmeriCorps volunteer is Emily Ruby, a recent graduate of Messiah College with a bachelor's degree in history. Emily spent part of her summer interning at the Frick Art and Historical Center in Pittsburgh where she worked as assistant to the Registrar.

As the Outreach Coordinator, Emily will be working on the newsletter and publicity, while also utilizing her background in history to provide on-site historical information about the town of Vintondale, the Vinton Colliery and the AMD&ART project.

Roman Chiu, a former AmeriCorps volunteer for AMD&ART, will be staying on board till the end of this year while he finishes up some projects he has been working on over the past year. He will be utilizing his skills in Industrial design and fine arts to AMD&ART's advantage as he oversees several ongoing art projects on site. One of his main goals is to finish all the signage at the Vintondale site and to update the AMD&ART web site.



## Site Happenings

There are many new and ongoing projects happening on site this year. We are currently putting the finishing touches on the trailside of the litmus garden. Over the past month, with much appreciated help from Frank Hanchar, Hanchar Superior Trees; Bobby Garvis, Vintondale resident; Greystone house of Adelphoi and Dr. Dick Lee, Army Corps of Engineers, all the new trees have been planted along the Ghost Town Trail. Frank helped identify and deliver trees, Bobby dug holes for more than 50 trees, Greystone planted most of the trees and dug quite a few holes while they were at it. Dr. Lee provided us with more than 20 cubic yards worth of material to manufacture soil to plant the trees. The soil is made up of a compost, biosolids, dredge, and fertilizer mix. We added lime to the bony that came out of the hole then mixed a 1:1 ratio of bony/lime mix to the manufactured soil to produce a great medium for excellent tree growth. There were some places where the bony was so tightly compacted that the only way to dig a hole was with a backhoe, then more "good" dirt was added to such holes to ensure ultimate survivorship of the trees. Sign plates are also in the design stages so that each band of native trees and shrubs will be easy to identify.

Full access to the recreation area is in the works, the road and parking area will be constructed this winter and ready when we put the soccer field in this spring. This winter we are doing lots of planning work to be able to take off at a running start in the spring. Some of the projects include seeding the treatment system slopes, improving the nature trail, and adding signs, as well as improvements that need to be made on the system.

There are always small projects that need to be done, if you would like to help or know of anyone that would, please contact Bethany James, our Site Coordinator (814-539-5357). This would be a great community service project for groups such as Schools, Scouts and National Honor Society.

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### Questions? Read the Signs

A curious biker on the Ghost Town trail will now understand what he is looking at when riding past the AMD&ART treatment park due to the brand new signage along the trail that explain the passive treatment system. Signs also run along the Litmus Garden, around the pavilion area, and near the coke oven foundations. This is only the beginning, as more informative signs along the nature trail are being added to the 20 signs already in place.

These signs were created with funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Growing Greener Grant. The signs are designed by Roman Chiu, printed by I-zone and installed by Zurenda Builders. They are mounted on foundations of stone block found on site during the excavation process.

Roman is also in the process of designing entrance signs to be displayed at each end of the park and the recreation area. These signs will contain a site map and images that visually describe the site.

AMD&ART hopes that the signs will be an effective teaching tool to those intersted in the site and that they will help spread the message of passive AMD treatment systems around coal country.



An informative sign along the Ghost Town Trail. One of Twenty signs that can be currently found on sight.





The boys of the Greystone House of Adelphoi, located in Jennerstown, working hard to plant trees before winter sets in at the AMD&ART Vintondale site.

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### **A Note from the Founder T. Allan Comp, Ph.D**

### **New Beginnings, Again and Again**

Once again, AMD&ART is fortunate in finding yet another generation of talented and determined AmeriCorps Members to carry on a tradition of service that now extends back nearly ten years. We've built a regional model that can be sustained by many in engaging our AmeriCorps Members, a model for low-cost and highly effective project support, for deep community engagement, and for fresh insight and perspective as each new generation of AmeriCorps finds its feet and brings its special skills to AMD&ART.

Our new AmeriCorps Members are described elsewhere, but I want to focus on the success of those past. Largely because of the past efforts of generations of AmeriCorps with AMD&ART, there is now a 28-member VISTA team working for individual watershed groups in coal country, actually across 5 states. The contacts, the experience and the confidence to assemble this team came directly from AMD&ART and its long history of direct service to the community. Thanks to those past generations of loyal and determined AmeriCorps Members, there are now 28 new places enjoying the services and support of people just like our new AmeriCorps.

Perhaps even more significant, there are two new AMD&ART projects now growing in coal country, again because of our direct success in making AMD&ART happen with very low costs. In Murray City, Ohio, the Monday Creek Project is working with the community to turn an old ball field into an AMD&ART park, one that includes AMD treatment, recreation and interpretation. In Wise, Virginia, actually on the campus of the University of Virginia's College at Wise, the AMD&ART model is helping to create a large wetlands AMD treatment system that will include nature walks, performance spaces for dancers, an interpretive program that brings history back to this campus spot (once a strip mine) and more. It's collaboration between the Arts and Science faculties and several local agencies, all of them inspired by AMD&ART in Vintondale, Pennsylvania.

As we start with a new generation of AmeriCorps Members and a new set of challenges in completing the AMD&ART site, it's inspiring to me to look back and see just how much we have accomplished and how many we have inspired. To me, that is our deepest connection to past generations in coal country.

TAC



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## AMD&ART in the News

\* Civil Engineering Magazine featured a two-page spread on the Vintondale site, which highlighted the innovative approach that the AMD&ART design team took towards the construction of their passive treatment system as something to be celebrated rather than hidden away. The article focused on the actual engineering of the treatment ponds and specifically mentioned the vertical flow construction of pond five. This article can be found in the August 2002 issue, volume 72, number 8.

\* The Alliance of Artists Communities published a narrative report on their "Future of Creativity" symposium, which featured an article based on a speech by Allan Comp. The Alliance symposium happens once every five years, and the AMD&ART Park in Vintondale was one of only six communities chosen in the Western Hemisphere. The symposium was interested in original ideas for taking art out of the studio and into the community. Allan Comp addressed how AMD&ART has taken practical steps to implement this idea at the Vintondale site. Symposium speaker Nicholas Rabkin noted, "The lesson of . . . Vintondale again is that our definition of art is just to small and constrained . . . It can matter to more people. It can address larger problems."

\* Ecovention, an "artist-initiated project," that aims to transform local ecologies through a multi-disciplinary approach, which stresses community involvement, featured an AMD&ART piece in their most recent exhibit at the Cleveland Museum of Art. AMD&ART was highlighted because of their original approach to passive treatment systems and because of the wide collaboration between various disciplines. The article claimed, "this [AMD&ART] could serve as a model program to revitalize other river valleys in Appalachia."

\* Greenworks.tv, a web site committed to showing that "real people are making a difference to protect our environment," will be featuring an article on the AMD&ART Park. Writer and photographer Dan Simeon from Greenworks came on site to take photographs and interview several people from AMD&ART and the Vintondale community. Look for his article on-line at [www.greenworks.tv](http://www.greenworks.tv).

\* The international art exhibit Documenta11, which has been operating since 1955, had its most recent show in Kassel, Germany. The exhibit, which featured a piece on AMD&ART, was displayed from June 8 through September 15<sup>th</sup>. While only landscape designer Julie Bargmann and artist Stacy Levy were recognized in the exhibit materials, it was a great honor for AMD&ART to receive such recognition, and a testimony to the hard work of the entire AMD&ART team and their commitment to the project.

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### History Revisited

AMD&ART is committed to an interdisciplinary approach to AMD remediation. Not only do we want to clean up the water affected by AMD, but we also desire to reconnect the community to its proud past. The town of Vintondale has a rich historical heritage and a valuable story to tell. Emily Ruby, the Outreach Coordinator, will be working on bringing the history of Vintondale and the Vinton Colliery to the Education Center and to the AMD&ART web site. She is very interested in industrial and post-industrial history and Vintondale's community history and contemporary perspectives. If you would like to speak with Emily or have information you think she might be interested in do not hesitate to call her at 814-539-5357, or write to [amdandart@amdandart.org](mailto:amdandart@amdandart.org).

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### Image is Everything

The Mine Portal/Great Map project planned for the entrance to mine #6 is in the works. The search is on for the right image to be etched on the full-scale granite portal entrance. The late Julies Morey, a resident of Vintondale, had film footage of the Vinton Colliery, which AMD&ART hopes to use to find the right image for the entrance. The footage now belongs to Mr. Morey's daughter who is more than willing to help AMD&ART find the footage and the right image. We hope to find a clear image of men going in and out of the mine so that the men memorialized on the granite are actual men from Vintondale. Work is also progressing on the Portal Platform mosaic, which will be a 15 by 25 foot map of the site based on the original 1928 Sanborn map. Allan Comp, Peter Richards, Roman Chiu and George M. Turner are working on finding the right artist and materials to get the job done.

five



## Strap On Your Shin Guards!

Thanks to some good catch up choreography by Allan Comp, the AMD&ART Park soccer field is back on track. With the collaboration of the United States Soccer Foundation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Waste Management Inc., the community of Vintondale and AMD&ART, the soccer field will be up and running this summer. Work is scheduled to begin early this spring so make sure you are ready. A highschool regulation size soccer field will be built with the collaboration of all these groups. AMD&ART would like to specifically thank Dr. Dick Lee from the Army Corps and Brad Minemyer from Laurel Highlands Landfill for their continued and vital support of this project. As soon as the field is done we look forward to everyone taking full advantage of it along with the newly completed pavilion.



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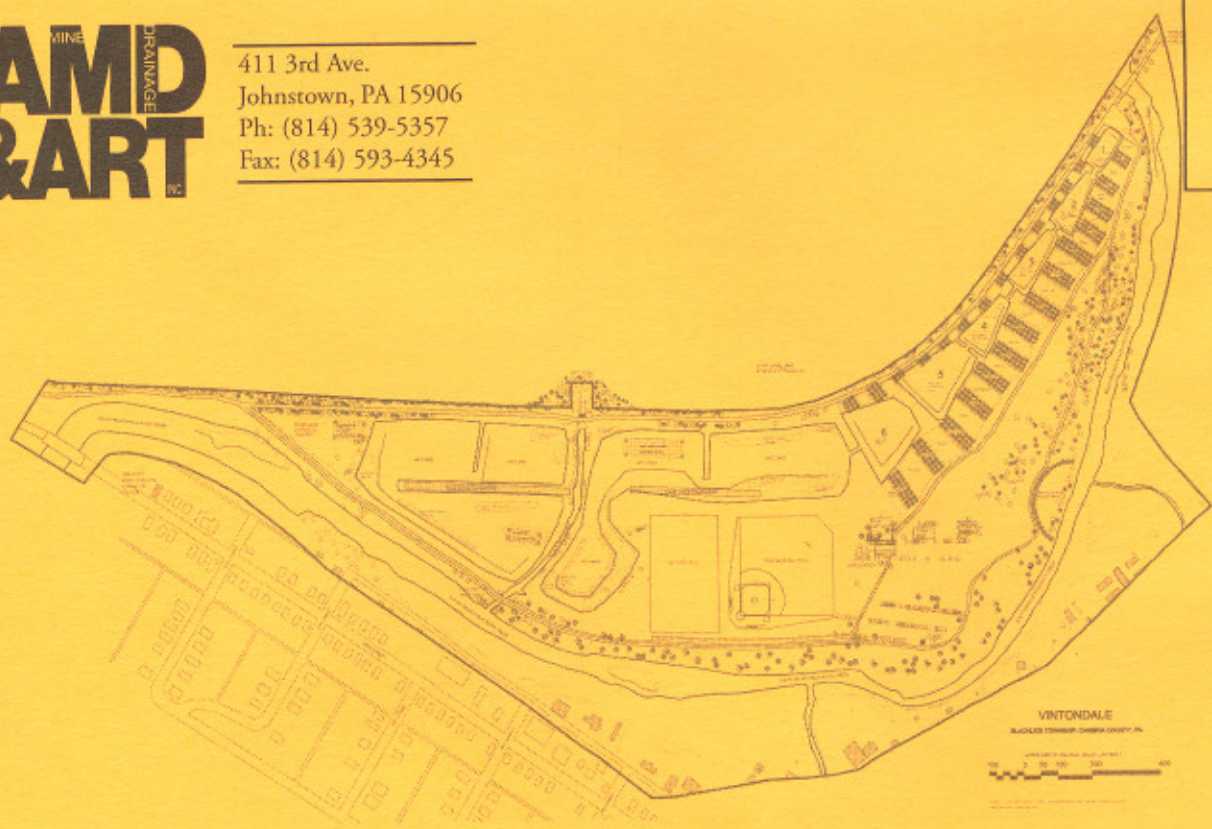
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# Project perks up dead streams in coal country

## Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Sunday, October 20, 2002

By Tom Gibb, Post-Gazette Staff Writer

**VINTONDALE, Pa.** -- In its own way, the brackish South Branch of Blacklick Creek records recent weather. With ample rain, the water flows orange with oxidized iron. With plenty of rain and breeze, it's dark with coal dust. During a dry spell earlier this month, it shriveled to 30 feet wide, flowing milky green with aluminum and other pollution. And as with hundreds of fouled tributaries along mined-out pieces of the Appalachian Mountains, "There's no life there," said George Turner, who recently signed on to work around the creek. That's the plight Turner and co-workers came to the western edge of Cambria County to attack -- an attack that means elevating mine drainage treatment, relatively bland stuff, into a showpiece and community magnet, complete with gardens, sculpture, picnic areas and ball fields. The \$800,000 endeavor -- dreamed up a decade ago but in the two-year home stretch now -- is supposed to return life to water flowing into the South Branch. That, in turn, is supposed to breathe life, color and pride into tiny, hard-times Vintondale. And that's supposed to inspire other hobbled towns in the Appalachian coal belt to follow suit. "This thing was built as a model," said T. Allan Comp, who fathered the project a decade ago and oversees it through Johnstown-based Acid Mine Drainage & Art Inc., a nonprofit agency. "In the big picture, it makes treatment of mine drainage a public event. ... That's part of the idea, to get other places to say, 'I want one in my back yard.'" Comp figures that his marrying art to ecological healing will trump a legacy of pollution and give the aded coal town a better rap. He foresees naturalists and artists coming to gaze on the project. Teachers re lining up to bring science and art students. And travelers on Ghost Town Trail -- a bicycle trail rawing 70,000 cyclists and hikers a year past omp's project -- could look on in puzzlement. "They'll ask, 'What's that?'" Comp said. Then, he figures, some are hooked, maybe to learn about curing acid mine drainage, maybe to ponder whether they could take the idea back to their own wns. Translated to language that might mean more to an ing town of meager means, Comp predicts that reading color where environmental scars were ans, "They'll see real estate values go up." 10 years ago, across the South Branch from town, dismal acres of stream side lay buried largely in ste coal. Today -- after tapping money from ernment and private foundations and soliciting as and muscle from Vintondale -- the effort has ure, working without chemicals or machinery, ining mine drainage by passing water through a 10-foot stretch of treatment ponds. Trees and ibs -- hundreds, 30 varieties, from wild cherry to onbush -- were trucked in for some landscaping wmanship. When the vegetation matures in e or four years, the treatment ponds will be lined a sweep from red to yellow to green, lematic of fouled water being nursed to onable health.

Seven acres of wetlands are being finished to draw plant and wildlife. Work is expected next year on neighboring baseball and soccer fields to draw domestic life. "It's like the house is built, and now you have to put on the siding and things like the trim around the windows," said Robert Deason, project hydrologist. "People were so glad to get rid of that ugly sight," said Jane Marines, a local resident who used to head the municipal authority that works with the project and still sits on the board of Comp's agency -- AMD & Art, for short. And townspeople are closer to the edges of their seats than they were when Comp first turned up with nothing to show but plans. "I remember, back around 1996, a couple of teenagers saying, 'Oh, they'll never build something like that here. ... It's just a couple of people blowing smoke,'" Deason said. Some cynicism may have been born by coal country acceptance of tainted water as just a legacy of mining -- an alien concept to outsiders. Bethany James, newly arrived on the AMD & Art staff, came, biology degree in hand, from a Kansas town not much larger than Vintondale -- but much different. "It's amazing to see streams you can't play in," she said. "I grew up playing in a stream." Vintondale's low hopes, though, also were cynicism born of experience. Eighty years ago, coal shepherded money to the company town. Six-hundred miners hauled coal from the hillsides. Production hit more than 400,000 tons a year. Coke ovens at the Vinton Coal Co. colliery stretched for a quarter-mile. A half-century ago, it all was over. The mining was done, the jobs gone. At the 2000 census, Vintondale had 528 people. Per-capita income was \$11,689, compared with \$20,880 statewide. Twenty-two percent of the residents were over age 65; the state average was 15 percent. "Once, we were booming," Borough Council President Michael Palovich said. "Now, we're back to square one." "That's typical of the small coal towns in the Appalachians," Comp said. Long after the Vinton Coal complex came down, the South Branch of the Blacklick still flowed orange, laden with metals and acidity. Waste coal covered the collieries site; the land became a provisional dump. Today, Comp is a program analyst with the federal Office of Surface Mining. But when he created AMD & Art, he was a historic preservationist, working with the commonwealth. His mission: Drive out dreariness by sopping up environmental taint, gussying up, getting the town involved and slathering on such icing as the ball field and soccer field. "I invented it 10 years ago to create something so beautiful, so engaging and delightful that it would be something that could be in your back yard, something that people would come to visit." Tour itineraries don't usually include, say, Vegas, Frisco, Hollywood with a stopover at a pollution control project. But this isn't another pollution project done with no fanfare.

The basics -- explained with newly installed signs -- a the six pools, the largest Olympic size, using compost limestone and aquatic plants to remove metals, acid and oxygen from the flow out of an idle Vinton Coal mine. Water goes into the system an acidic 2.5 pH and emerges a neutral 7, said George Turner, a resident of Windber, Somerset County, who graduated from Savannah College of Art and Design before signing or with Comp through the Americorps program. The water is good enough to sustain life, albeit not fit t drink. But drainage several miles upstream means Comp's project alone won't resurrect the South Branch. The creek will remain among the state's 3,129 miles of coal fouled streams. Still, Comp deems the project cause for celebration. The mundane, scientific world might take the place where treated water flows into the Blacklick and dub it, say, The Place Where Treated Water Flows into the Blacklick. In Comp's project, it's Celebration Point. And he's enlisting students at design schools in 13 Appalachian states to suggest something -- maybe sculpture, maybe landscaping -- to mark the spot. A leftover concrete slab from the colliery will be transformed to a map -- maybe sandblasted concrete, maybe mosaic or colored concrete -- showing the site in its industrial heyday. At a sealed mine entrance nearby, sculpture will show almost ghostly images of miners heading off to work. Those are extras on a project AMD & Art scrambles to afford, cobbling grants from sources ranging from the Environmental Protection Agency to the Rockefeller Foundation. The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation kicked in \$92,100 for wetlands, replacing habitat destroyed in a nearby road project. Navy SeaBees built a picnic pavilion. At no charge, a power plant operator hauled off 70,000 tons of waste coal to fire its boilers. Last spring, 150 volunteers planted trees. Staffing is three recent college graduates, Americorps workers pocketing \$800 monthly and eligible for \$4,750 to repay school loans if they work 1,700 hours. But low pay still yielded enthusiasm from recruits such as Monroeville resident Emily Ruby, a Messiah College history graduate drawn to AMD & Art because "the whole idea of post-industrialism interests me." "This project was built on the assumption that if I wait for government to do it, it won't happen," Comp said. " ... Getting funders makes it messy, but it makes it happen." He said that in another two years, when AMD & Art finishes the project and turns it over to Vintondale Borough, he doesn't know what will follow. Maybe the agency will simply preach the Vintondale story elsewhere, he said. "But right now," Comp said, "We're trying to get totally finished and then breathe a few times."

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# Vintondale's AMD&ART Park

## Vintondale, Pennsylvania

### 1. Acid Mine Drainage Treatment System

This system treats acid mine drainage (AMD) from the abandoned Vinton Colliery Mine #3.

### 2. Native Plant "Litmus Garden"

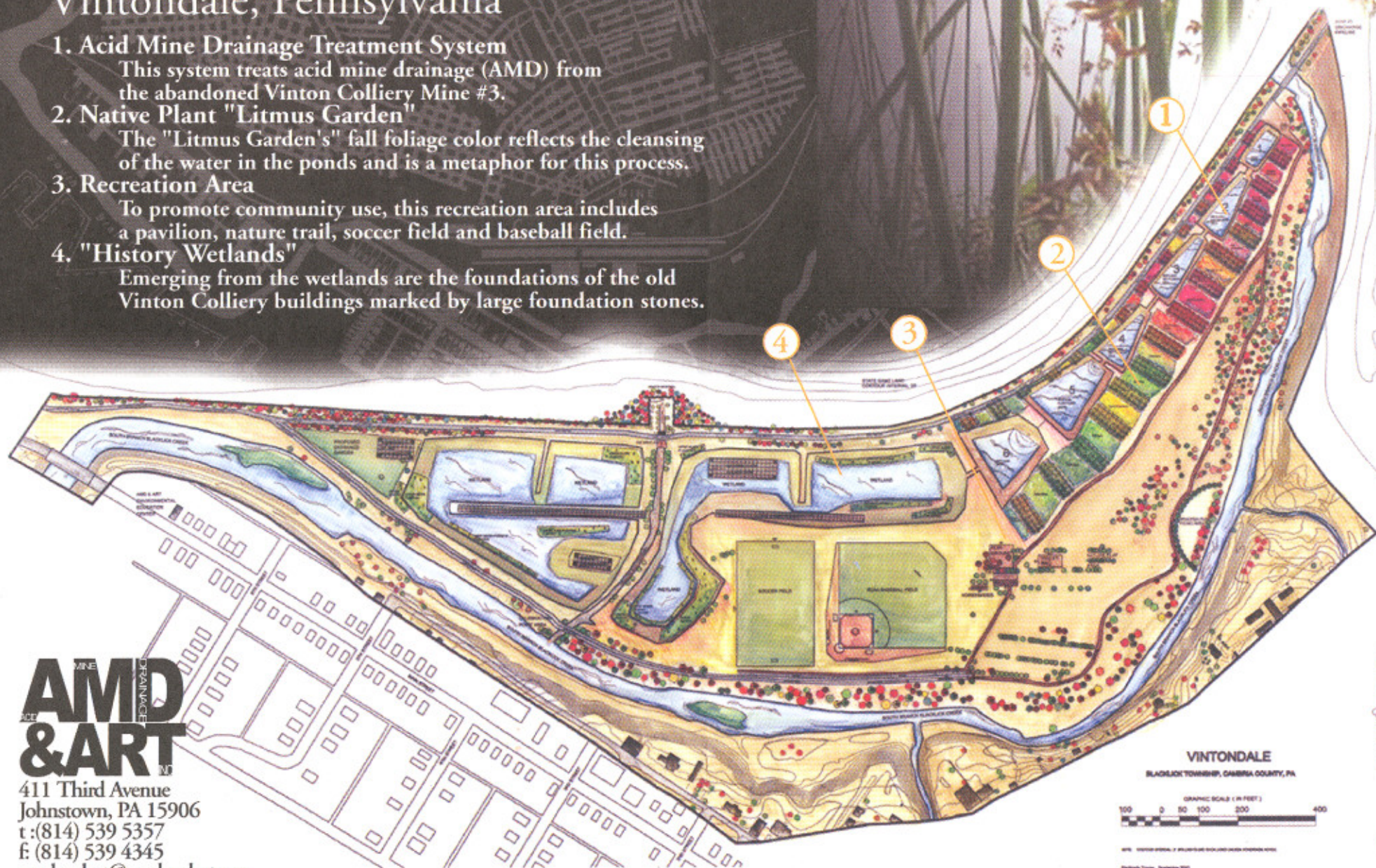
The "Litmus Garden's" fall foliage color reflects the cleansing of the water in the ponds and is a metaphor for this process.

### 3. Recreation Area

To promote community use, this recreation area includes a pavilion, nature trail, soccer field and baseball field.

### 4. "History Wetlands"

Emerging from the wetlands are the foundations of the old Vinton Colliery buildings marked by large foundation stones.



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*Transforming Environmental Liabilities Into Community Assets*

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