

Date: Nov 17, 2011; Section: Area News; Page: 1-D

Mine research gets boost

WVU team of 5 receives \$500K

BY ALEX LANG
The Dominion Post

Five WVU researchers have received \$500,000 to study surface coal mining with the purpose of generating more objective data about the practice.

The five are part of the

Appalachian Research Initiative for Environmental Sciences (ARIES). They are working on different projects under ARIES, said Paul Ziemkiewicz, who is leading WVU's part of the project and is director of the West Virginia Water Research Institute at the National Research Center for Coal and Energy.

WVU research projects include studying local watersheds, studying the weathering of mined rock and looking at how mining practices cause envi-

ronmental disturbances.

Besides Ziemkiewicz, the WVU research team includes Todd Petty from Wildlife and Fisheries Resources; Mike Strager, resource management; Jeff Skousen and Louis McDonald, Plant and Soil Science, all in the Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Design; and Vlad Kecojevic, from the College of Engineering and Mineral Resources.

The project's goal is to build data regarding issues around

surface mining, Ziemkiewicz said. The money for the research came to the WVU Foundation from the Virginia Tech Foundation, which received funding from the coal industry.

Ziemkiewicz said people shouldn't be worried that the information collected would be biased. All the studies will be peer reviewed. One advantage of peer review, Ziemkiewicz explained, is that other

SEE **RESEARCH**, 2-D

RESEARCH

FROM PAGE 1-D

people look at the data and see whether the process was done correctly and the conclusions are correct.

Petty said his project involves studying local watershed stressors. Stressors include acid mine drainage and wastewater disposal. The research project is trying to figure out how much damage a particular action causes to a watershed.

Once the data are collected, Petty said, the researchers can use a model to determine whether something added or removed affects the watershed. For example, they could see what would happen if there was 50 percent less wastewater disposal in a stream.

The ARIES initiative includes several other universities, such as Virginia Tech, Ohio State and the University of Kentucky.

The initial funding request began about a year ago, and WVU researchers got involved this past spring, Ziemkiewicz said.

Some studies from the initiative are already under review, he said.