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DANVILLE VIRGINIA

Mining Jobs

EDITORIAL

DANVILLE REGISTER & BEE

A new report on the Coles Hill uranium deposit that included references about the Dan River Region's work force rings true.

The report found that, "Mining personnel can reasonably be recruited from the local area, as the skill sets needed for miners exist already among people and companies who are comfortable with farming and heavy equipment. ... The site has significant advantages over remote areas for the recruitment and retention of mining personnel."

Virginia Uranium Inc. has said that an operational mine and mill at Coles Hill could create as many as 300-500 new jobs. Based on the wages paid uranium miners in other parts of the country, a miner here could make \$70,000 per year.

Virginia Uranium won't have any trouble finding local people who can handle backhoes, dump trucks and other heavy equipment, as well as the jobs in its proposed uranium mill.

The company will also need to hire chemists, mining engineers and other

skilled technical workers.

If the project advances that far, it's likely that Danville Community College or some other state agency would wind up working with VUI to recruit, screen and train local workers.

The employment issue is just one of the many factors that are being considered as part of the potential economic impact of a uranium mine and mill in Pittsylvania County. But nobody should quit their job just yet.

Virginia's moratorium on uranium mining remains in place, and a state study of mining – which could take two years to complete – hasn't started yet.

While it's early in the process, Virginia Uranium has shown a willingness to hire local people and companies to do the work it has today. If the project were to advance to the point where miners were hired, it's a good bet the company would want to hire as many local people as possible.

One local person VUI has hired is geologist, project manager and company spokesman Patrick Wales, a Danville native who received his bachelor's

degree from Radford University and his master's degree from the University of Mississippi.

Wales said the worldwide annual demand for uranium is 180 million pounds, compared with a yearly production of 110 million pounds. The difference is coming from stockpiles and surpluses that are rapidly running out.

"There's an inherent demand for this product," Wales said.

New nuclear power plants will, of course, increase demand for uranium, while problems in the industry – delays in bringing new plants online, future accidents, plant retirements or even a shift to other forms of energy – would decrease demand.

But based on what we know today, it appears the world will want more uranium in the future, not less.

Could the Dan River Region's work force one day help satisfy some of that demand for uranium? There's no doubt local workers could fill uranium mining jobs. The question today is whether Virginia Uranium Inc. will ever get to that point.
