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For more information, contact:

Ashley Stinnett, Communications Coordinator

astinnett@coalfield-development.org

304-544-6740

Coalfield Development Takes Part in White House Roundtable Focusing on Economic Revitalization In Coal Country

Washington, D.C. – Recently, Coalfield Development’s CEO Brandon Dennison was invited to the White House for a roundtable discussion hosted by the Interagency Working Group on Coal and Power Plant Communities and Economic Revitalization (IWG). The Working Group is Co-Chaired by National Climate Advisor Gina McCarthy and National Economic Council Director Brian Deese.

The roundtable focused on new private sector and philanthropic investments that have been spurred by the Administration’s efforts to support economic revitalization in energy communities. The roundtable also discussed the announcement of initial awards from the Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration (EDA) \$300 million Coal Communities Commitment to support economic revitalization, infrastructure investments, and quality jobs in coal communities with funding from the American Rescue Plan. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm, and Appalachian Regional Commission Federal Co-Chair Gayle Manchin also participated in the meeting.

"Going to the White House was a tremendous honor and a surreal experience. During the meeting, I personally thanked the multiple cabinet secretaries and top-level presidential advisors present for their commitment to coal communities. Over the past year, this administration has shown a sustained focus on rural coal-areas and that should not go unnoticed," said Dennison.

The discussion highlighted how President Biden’s American Rescue Plan and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law are already catalyzing economic activity in energy communities and how the Build Back Better Act will further expand economic opportunity in these communities. The discussion also emphasized how executive actions like the formation of the IWG and the launch of the Justice40 Initiative have catalyzed a whole of government effort to invest in historically disadvantaged communities. The Co-Chairs also released an end of year report highlighting how the Administration’s administrative and legislative actions have bolstered economic activity in energy communities.

"In response to questions about what we community organizations need on the ground, I emphasized the need for flexibility, bottom-up solutions, and faster moving programs. And I'm encouraged by

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improvements being made in these areas,” Dennison added.

Coalfield Development is spearheading the Appalachian Climate Technology (ACT) Now Coalition to support the transition from coal to a climate resilient economy in southern West Virginia. This includes initiatives in green manufacturing, solar power, reuse and recycling, local agriculture, technology, and reclamation of abandoned mine sites. The coalition is seeking nearly \$100 million in new investment to spark fresh investment and new business activity.

Last month, Coalfield announced it had been selected by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) as one of 60 finalists in the \$1 billion Build Back Better Regional Challenge. This was out of an applicant pool of more than 500 other communities.

The ACT Now coalition consist of dozens of public and private partners working to expand emerging climate resilient sectors of the local economy including the state’s two largest cities (City of Huntington and the City of Charleston) as well as its two largest universities (West Virginia University and Marshall University). ACT Now is led by some of the most innovative community and economic development nonprofits in the state including (among many others) the West Virginia Community Development Hub, Advantage Valley, The Nature Conservancy, and Generation West Virginia. More than 20 employers are supporting the coalition, committing to increase employment and investment in the region.

“We are thrilled to be a Build Back Better Regional Challenge Phase 1 finalist. This administration has committed a significant portion of this program's funds going to coal communities which I think is commendable. For the first time in my career, there is a program offering enough funds to do something truly transformation and provide the resources needed to build a new economy for the changing times in which we live. This is a truly historic opportunity,” Dennison said.

Coalfield Development is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization headquartered in Wayne, West Virginia focusing on rebuilding the Appalachian economy through social enterprise creation, job training, and community-based real-estate development.

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