

Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation

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February 19, 2009

Deputy Director Glenda Owens
Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement
South Interior Building, Room 233
1951 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Deputy Director Glenda Owens:

The Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation is a non-profit environmental organization promoting abandoned mine reclamation (the SMCRA Title IV variety) throughout the bituminous coal fields of western Pennsylvania. We work cooperatively with governmental, corporate, academic, non-profit, and grass roots organizations in the effective utilization of the limited available resources in reclamation of mine-scarred lands and mining polluted waters.

A great potential benefit for Pennsylvania resulted from Congressional reauthorization of the Surface Mining Conservation and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) in December 2006. The new law provides a significant increase in funding available to the Commonwealth (and other eastern mining States) for reclamation of abandoned mine lands thereby reducing water pollution, restoring land and eliminating public safety hazards.

While we understand that an effort to eliminate \$21 million in Fiscal Year 2009 funding for the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Emergency Program has been addressed by a Continuing Resolution, we remain concerned about the need to protect against future funding cuts and against transferring responsibility for emergency situations to the states.

The Office of Surface Mining (OSM) currently administers the AML Emergency Program in Pennsylvania and Kentucky. Since 2002, the OSM has responded to approximately 775 emergency situations in Pennsylvania alone and has spent nearly \$24 million on emergencies.

The loss of federal emergency funds would require Pennsylvania to shift monies from other mine land reclamation projects. This additional burden will hamper our ability to reclaim our huge inventory of high priority abandoned mine lands and address related mine drainage issues. In Pennsylvania, elimination of this program could result in a funding shortfall for AML projects of approximately \$3 million annually. In addition, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection estimates that the cost for Pennsylvania to administer the AML Emergency Program could be an additional \$2.5 million annually, further reducing project funds.

“Take a stand for reclamation”



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As a result, we respectfully request that you take appropriate action that would safeguard continued funding of the Office of Surface Mining AML Emergency Program.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Eppley, Jr., Ph.D.
Board of Directors, President

cc: Governor Rendell
Pa. Congressional Delegation