

WPCAMR Regional Coordinator's Report

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LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

STATE

- SB1374. An Act amending Title 27 (Environmental Resources) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, in environmental stewardship and watershed protection, further providing for legislative findings and for agencies and establishing duties for the Department of Community and Economic Development, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, the Pennsylvania Game Commission and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

This legislation has bi-partisan support with seventeen co-sponsors at this time. It was referred to The Senate Committee on ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY, Sept. 28, 2016.

FEDERAL

- ***EPA grant/contract freeze***

This freeze became effective Monday, January 23, 2017. It's likely that, if still in effect, this freeze could affect our new 319 contract that's effective July 1. We understand that this executive order/freeze will only be effective for 45 days, after which, Congress will have to act to extend it.

- ***House Spending Bill***

There was another spending Bill put forth by the House of Representatives for the 2016-2017 year which calls for another infusion of funds to selected states very similar to the one from last year. If this spending bill passes, it could result in another infusion of funding to Pennsylvania for working on AMR projects that have an economic development component to them.

- ***RECLAIM Act version 2***

A re-released version of the original RECLAIM Act however, this version has some differences that could mean less funding for PA. The calculations for fund distributions could mean that PA would receive several million dollars less than the previous iteration of the RECLAIM Act from 2016.

- ***S.1714 - Miners Protection Act of 2015***

Introduced by Sen. Manchin (D-WV), this bill has been sitting in the Senate Finance Committee. This bill amends the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 to address potential shortages in the Multiemployer Health Benefit Plan for payment of health care benefits to retired coal miners by expanding the eligible uses of interest transferable to such plan from the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund, and supplemental payments from the General Fund of the Treasury. This bill did not advance in the 114th Congress and is dead. There is a possibility that it will be resurrected in the 115th Congress. Congress has stated that it will address a long-term solution for the miners once the CR expires in April 2017.

- ***SMCRA Fee Re-authorization***

We continue to work with the PA AML Campaign/TU/State/IMCC on re-authorization of the Title IV fees for SMCRA, participating in conference calls, etc. There isn't much going on in DC that could accelerate reauthorization except for the newly re-released RECLAIM Act. There is a possibility that the RECLAIM Act may be a vehicle to try to get reauthorization passed, but I believe it to be a remote possibility since we haven't heard of any Representative interested in attaching re-authorization to RECLAIM.

Sequestration

- Still goes on with PA losing funding from its annual Title IV grant. Part of what the AML Campaign is looking for is an end to the sequestering of Title IV grant funds.

OTHER ITEMS

Quick Response

We continue to expend funds from QR7 and have requested and received an extension to expend those funds through December of 2017.. We applied for a Quick Response 8 through Growing Greener. The new grant, once approved next year, would continue the Quick Response program after the QR7 grant is finished.

2017 Statewide AMR Conference

Planning for the 2017 annual conference is continuing. The planning committee has decided to have the conference in Wilkes Barre. Anne will provide a more in-depth update of the conference in her report.

Administrative

I put together the start of a plan for approaching Foundations for funding and sent it to our Finance Committee for their review.

I began working with the new payroll company. We will see significant cost savings by working with the locally-owned, "Simply Payroll".

Other Meetings

- Industrial Hemp meeting with Rep. Eric Nelson , Greensburg, December 2016