

**Duane Miller (VA) Remarks for Congressional
Environment Subcommittee Hearing on the
Benefits of the EPA Brownfields Program in
Rural, Coal Communities.**

**Good Morning – Chairman Guthrie, Chairman
Griffith, Vice Chairman Crenshaw, Ranking
Member Tonko and Members of the
Subcommittee,**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on the critical role of the EPA's Brownfields Program in revitalizing rural, coal communities. I represent voices from the communities of Southwestern Virginia that have powered this nation for generations—towns built around coal mines, processing plants and industries

that once thrived but have since faced economic downturns and environmental challenges.

The Brownfields Program is a lifeline for these communities. It transforms once-contaminated, underutilized properties into productive sites for economic development, public use and community restoration. The program does not just clean up land—it restores hope, attracts investment and paves the way for a new economic future.

Economic Revitalization and Job Creation

One of the most significant benefits of the Brownfields Program is its role in economic development. Rural, coal-impacted communities often struggle to attract

new businesses due to environmental concerns tied to former mining/industrial sites. Brownfields funding changes that equation. By assessing and remediating contamination, these sites, often the only developable flat acreage in a locality of sloped terrain, become viable locations for manufacturers, small businesses and even plethora of possible renewable energy and data center projects.

We've seen direct results: For every federal dollar invested in Brownfields cleanup, communities see an average return of \$20 in economic activity.

Moreover, it is estimated that Brownfields redevelopment creates over 10 jobs per \$100,000 spent, jobs that stay in the community and provide opportunities for displaced coal workers and younger generations alike.

Infrastructure and Housing Development

Beyond job creation, Brownfields funding enables rural communities to repurpose land for critical infrastructure projects. Many former coal-related sites are being transformed into modern industrial parks (Project Intersection), and it is our hope, future housing developments to meet growing community needs. Without this federal support, many of these

sites would remain abandoned, limiting the region's ability to attract new residents, industry and businesses.

Environmental and Public Health Benefits

The Brownfields Program is not just about industrial economic growth—it's also about promoting the resurgence of downtown communities. Many downtown district brownfield sites contain legacy contaminants that pose risks. Brownfields funding allows localities to clean up these sites and create prime locations for downtown district resurgence — further improving the livability and quality of life in these communities.

A Foundation for the Energy Transition

Many rural, coal-dependent communities are seeking ways to diversify their economies while maintaining their identity. Brownfields funding is playing a critical role in repurposing former mine lands and industrial sites for new energy/data center development, including, battery storage facilities and even small modular reactor possibilities to meet ever growing domestic and data center development power needs. These projects align with federal and state goals for energy security while ensuring that rural areas remain key players in America's emerging data center and energy future.

Closing Thoughts

The EPA's Brownfields Program is one of the most successful examples of federal investment sparking local revitalization. It empowers rural communities to turn environmental liabilities into economic assets. In my experience, when a former coal site is cleaned up and put back into productive use, it does more than remove contamination—it restores local pride, creates economic opportunity and provides a pathway for the next generation to stay and thrive in their hometowns.

I urge this committee to continue its support for the Brownfields Program, ensuring that rural, coal-impacted communities have the resources needed to reclaim their land, rebuild their economies and create a more sustainable future.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.