

The Honorable Raul Grijalva  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1511 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rob Bishop  
U.S. House of Representatives  
123 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Alan Lowenthal  
U.S. House of Representatives  
108 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Paul Gosar  
U.S. House of Representatives  
504 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

December 2, 2019

Dear Chair Raúl Grijalva and Subcommittee Chair Alan Lowenthal, Ranking Members Rob Bishop and Paul Gosar:

**On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we urge you to support the AML Reauthorization Act, H.R.4248, which would reauthorize the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Trust Fund. These funds are critically important for job creation, economic development, wildlife habitat and the environmental health of communities across the United States.**

Throughout Appalachia alone, an estimated 5.5 million people live within one mile of an abandoned mine land. Abandoned mine lands create negative impacts on local economies by destroying recreational opportunities, lowering land values, limiting the potential for residential, forestry, commercial or agricultural uses, and threatening human health and safety of people living near AML sites.

The reclamation of AML sites adds to the economy by creating jobs and providing sites that can be used for commercial or industrial endeavors. In the history of the program, amazing strides have been made, including the restoration of over \$5.7 billion worth of AML projects and the reclamation of nearly 800,000 acres of damaged land and water across the country.

The current fee that supports the AML fund (ranging from 8 to 28 cents per ton of coal) is set to expire in September 2021. However, the reclamation work is far from complete. According to the AML inventory, unaddressed abandoned mine sites represent more than \$10 billion in unfunded taxpayer liability, and a continuing threat to the health, economy, and living environments for citizens of these communities.

The AML Reauthorization Act (H.R. 4248) will:

- Extend states' authority to collect fees at current levels for 15 years;
- Expand funding for states that have not been certified for reclaiming high-priority coal AML areas;
- Provide for the delegation of emergency AML programs to states;
- And reimburse states for AML fees that were sequestered since Fiscal Year 2013.

Without reauthorization of the AML fee, a disastrous amount of AML work is likely to remain unaddressed. Dangerous mine hazards will persist and unforeseen AML emergencies will continue to cause property damage, illness, injury, and economic stagnation in communities across the country.

Continued contributions of the AML Program to AML-impacted communities is one thing that is needed in order for these communities to reach their true potential. We urge Congress to pass the AML Reauthorization Act, H.R.4248, which would reauthorize the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Trust Fund.

Sincerely,

### **Regional and National Organizations**

Appalachian Voices  
BlueGreen Alliance  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Center for Rural Strategies  
Interfaith Power & Light  
National Wildlife Federation  
Sierra Club  
The Alliance for Appalachia  
Utility Workers Union of America  
Valley Watch, Inc.  
Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC)

### **Illinois**

Action Metro East  
Clean Power Lake County  
Eco-Justice Collaborative  
Faith in Place Action Fund  
Metro East Green Alliance  
People for Community Recovery  
Prairie Rivers Network  
Southeast Environmental Task Force

### **Kentucky**

Appalachian Citizens' Law Center  
Kentuckians For The Commonwealth

**Montana**

Northern Plains Resource Council

**Ohio**

Rural Action

**Pennsylvania**

Center for Coalfield Justice

Citizens Coal Council

Eastern Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation (EPCAMR)

Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds

PennFuture

**Tennessee**

Clean Water Expected in East Tennessee

Statewide Organizing for Community eMpowerment (SOCM)

Woodland Community Land Trust

Mountain Women's Exchange

Woodland Community Development Corporation

**Virginia**

Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards

**West Virginia**

CLEAR, Cheat Lake Environment & Recreation Association

Coalfield Development Corporation

Dunkard Creek Watershed Assn., Inc.

Friends of Deckers Creek

Friends of the Cheat

Friends of Blackwater

Natural Resource Center at West Virginia University

Upper Monongahela River Association

West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

West Virginia Rivers Coalition

**Wyoming**

Powder River Basin Resource Council