



122 McCune Drive • Butler PA 16001 • Phone (724)284-5270 • Fax (724)285-5515 • [www.bccdonline.org](http://www.bccdonline.org)

March 22, 2019

The Hon. Raul M. Grijalva, Chairman  
The Hon. Rob Bishop, Ranking Member  
The Hon. Alan Lowenthal, Subcommittee on Energy and Natural Resources, Chairman  
U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Reauthorization of the Collection Fees Supporting the Abandoned Mine Land Fund

Dear Representatives,

I am writing to highlight the need for reauthorization of the collection fees associated with the Surface Mine Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) of 1977. Over a century of environmentally unregulated mining practices took a huge toll on the land and water where mining occurred. But SMCRA changed the face of the coal mining industry into one that is vastly safer with a significantly smaller environmental impact and allowed for reclamation of pre-regulation hazards and scars.

The reclamation work that the SMCRA funds have funded has increased the quality of life in Butler County. The completed reclamation sites have addressed both water quality and health/safety issues from previous mining practices.

The majority of the mine sites in Butler County are located in northern half of the county. Most of the outdoor tourism (hunting, bird watching, kayaking, and fishing) occurs in the same area. When the mines are reclaimed and provide better habitat, there is an increase in tourism to this region. The reclamation work also provides a significant source of good paying construction and engineering jobs.

The SMCRA funding source has allowed our Conservation District to partner with Federal Agencies (USDA and OSM), State Agencies (DEP-BAMR and DCNR) as well as local consulting firms. These partnerships strengthen our working relationships and benefit future projects involving AML sites as well as unrelated projects (commercial, recreational, and housing).

Funding for reclamation activities is derived from a fee on every ton of coal mined in the U.S. since 1977. Those fees are placed into an account known as the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund. The collection of these fees is set to expire in September of 2021. However, our work is not done. Without the funds to continue the reclaiming the AML sites in Butler County, our recreational tourism is likely to decline.

Sincerely,

Ian Harrell  
District Manager  
Butler County Conservation District