



GARY R. HERBERT  
Governor

SPENCER J. COX  
Lieutenant Governor

# State of Utah

## DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

BRIAN C. STEED  
Executive Director

### Division of Oil, Gas and Mining

JOHN R. BAZA  
Division Director

*Support*

November 7, 2019

The Honorable Rob Bishop  
123 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Bishop:

Thank you for your good work for the state of Utah and especially for your work to streamline federal regulatory processes in various ways.

I'm writing today to provide input for your consideration as the House Committee on Natural Resources meets next week to consider the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act Amendments of 2019.

First, it's important to note that Utah's approach to energy has always been "all-of-the-above", and to develop every available type of energy—including coal—in an environmentally responsible way. I mention this because it is often implied or assumed incorrectly that these goals are mutually exclusive. We're proud of our record on protecting the environment and developing fossil fuels that provide affordable and reliable energy for millions of Americans.

I will also point out that as the coal industry faces challenging economic conditions, Utah has been innovative in finding ways to help the industries and communities most dependent on our coal reserves. We have developed overseas markets for our coal, spearheaded research into how we can develop coal products into carbon-fiber composite materials, and helped rural communities find alternative opportunities for economic growth.

With that context, I want to point out some of the benefits Utah has received from the Surface Mine and Reclamation Act of 1977 and the funds we receive from the fees it generates.

To date in Utah this funding has allowed the Division of Oil, Gas and Mining to perform nearly 100 coal reclamation projects, which involves the closure of mine portals and shafts, disposal and burial of coal refuse, restoration of stream channels, restoration of springs, reduction of highwalls, and the extinguishing and/or monitoring of coal refuse and mine fires.

The funding has also allowed the Division to secure over 6,000 dangerous hard-rock mine openings throughout the state in more than 100 separate projects.

Despite the best efforts and wise use of funds to date, there remain more than 11,000 dangerous legacy mine openings scattered throughout the state that need secured - many in increasingly popular recreation areas.



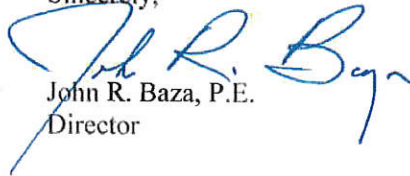
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If the fee collection is not re-authorized, the Division would not be able to complete the work we have started and the 11,000 hazards would remain. Any coal problems that are un-catalogued now but may manifest themselves in the future (such as subsidence, fires, impacts to springs and streams) would also remain un-mitigated.

In short, I support the re-authorization of the fee. I also support modifications to previous versions of the bill which removed an east-west bias and which will allow Utah to continue working on both coal and non-coal projects located throughout the state.

Again, I appreciate your work and I would be glad to answer any questions you or your staff may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John R. Baza". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

John R. Baza, P.E.  
Director