

## Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation

226 Donohoe Road Suite 110, Greensburg, PA 15601

(724) 832-3625 (724) 832-3625 (fax)

bruce@wpcamr.org www.wpcamr.org www.AMRClearinghouse.org



August 17, 2007

Secretary Kathleen McGinty  
Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection  
Rachel Carson State Office Building  
PO Box 2063  
Harrisburg, PA 17105-2063

Dear Secretary McGinty:

The recent revision to the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) indeed represents a once in a generation opportunity to address Pennsylvania's monumental abandoned mine problems. The new funding will literally cut decades from the time it will take for abandoned mine reclamation efforts to occur. Yet, as good as this news is, the magnitude of the problems still far outstrip our foreseeable resources. We believe it is incumbent on the Commonwealth to make the very most of this significant albeit limited opportunity. And, of course, I realize I'm preaching to the choir.

We applaud the Department's good will and openness to input regarding this new funding from all sectors as witnessed by the SMCRA Title IV public roundtables. Commendably, Pennsylvania stands alone as the only state to hold such forums. These meetings have been quite valuable for information exchange between the Department and the public.

As is the case anytime the magnitude of a problem dwarfs the resources available to address it, choices are necessary in deciding which part of the problem is to be addressed. In this case, some of those choices will be particularly challenging. We believe this is a perfect opportunity to call upon individuals and organizations outside the Department to come together with the Department in forming a permanent advisory committee for the purpose of helping to formulate future directions for Title IV funding.

As a shining example, I point to the tremendous work that came from the Mining Reclamation Advisory Board's Orphan Mine Task Force. Here the Department worked in close partnership with the talented and knowledgeable individuals from outside the Department who have set some exciting new directions.

On first blush, a subcommittee of the MRAB may appear to be an ideal candidate for the suggested advisory committee. Whereas I have tremendous respect for the MRAB, I do have misgivings about using it in this context. The MRAB is largely focused on active mining and matters Title V. Its membership is weighted toward the active mining industry. My concern is that Title IV issues would be a sidebar issue largely lacking the perspective of the abandoned mine reclamation community.

***"Take a stand for reclamation"***



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With this said, it is our contention that a separate permanent advisory committee be established whose interests are focused on Title IV issues. I believe there to be many qualified and experienced members of the abandoned mine reclamation community with suitable diversity who would be willing to serve. Just look at the work done by the AML Campaign in helping to get the newly enacted SMCRA legislation passed if you have any doubts.

We very much appreciate the efforts the Department has made in its careful consideration of the impacts the new SMCRA funding has brought to the Commonwealth. We hope you have found these thoughts useful. We look forward to continue working with the Department in advancing abandoned mine reclamation in the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

Bruce Golden  
Regional Coordinator

cc. S. Roberts  
R. Fletcher  
R. Eppley