

The Future Is Now!

I first wish to thank and congratulate all of the people who worked so hard to get passage of the new Abandoned Mine Land Bill. Well done!

It is now time to plan how to best spend the money so that greatest safety and environmental improvements can be gotten from the money spent. Priority one projects, those that pose the biggest danger to human health and well being should of course be prioritized and tackled first. While doing so I would like to see a more “holistic” or watershed approach be applied, not only to priority one projects but all projects.

Remember the caveat, “whatever we do to the land we do to the water.” With this in mind, I ask that a long, hard look be taken downstream to see what impacts or benefits a particular project will have on a watershed and how, while treating the obvious problem, can we also enhance downstream benefits. This type of approach should give us the biggest environmental bang for the buck.

Every effort should be made to eliminate the infiltration of entire streams into old mine workings. This will have several benefits. It will eliminate openings into abandoned mines, thereby reducing a safety threat, it will reduce the amount of Abandoned Mine Drainage[AML] that will have to be treated and by reducing the amount of AMD also reduce the size needed for future AMD treatment systems. Over the long run I feel that putting streams back onto the surface will also prove to be very cost effective as it should reduce costs of installing AMD treatment systems and also reduce long term operation and maintenance costs for these systems.

Whenever and wherever possible, wetlands should be created as part of reclamation efforts. These wetlands will not only provide habitat for wildlife but should also be designed to help reduce the impact of stormwater events, even if this means that some water may infiltrate old workings. Even though such infiltration may seem counter to what I said previously, I feel that we can plan for the treatment of additional AMD from such infiltration and reduce potential downstream flood events.

When planning AML reclamation I suggest that every opportunity to increase the fertility of the “soil” be taken, especially the use of waste organic by products. By doing so we can help mitigate the effects of greenhouse gasses by planning for the sequestration of carbon. Perhaps it is even possible to realize some carbon sequestration credits for such work.

Finally, I strongly urge greater cooperation between all parties, whether they be government agencies, the landowners, and local groups such as watershed organizations. By partnering in such projects I feel that we can capitalize on the synergy of partnerships and sharing of information.

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