

WPCAMR Regional Coordinator's Report

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August 13, 2015

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

STATE

- SB 368. Introduced January 30, 2015 by Sen. White
- HB1370. Introduced June 29, 2015 by Rep. Gibbons.
Both for establishing a coal refuse energy and reclamation tax credit. SB368 was amended in Finance Committee on June 24, 2015 and re-referred to Appropriations on June 25, 2015. HB was referred to Committee on Environmental Resources and Energy on June 29, 2015.
- SB875. Introduced June 4, 2015 by Sen. Bartoletta when it was referred to Environmental Resources and Energy. My understanding is that the bill was to come up for a vote in the full Senate soon.
- No state budget at this time. We've received a letter from the Wolf Administration which asks stakeholders for patience as the Governor and General Assembly work on a budget.

FEDERAL

OSMRE Budget and Power + Plan

- It appears that the Administration's Power + plan (which includes the FY 16 OSMRE budget) continues to gain some momentum. However, we have no specific legislation available that would show how the Administration proposes to amend SMCRA in order to make funds available. There are several legislative actions that are proposed to be part of this budget. Among those are shoring up the UMWA combined benefits fund. We understand that the fund needs an infusion of funding within the next 18 months or risk not being solvent. We have been in contact with OSMRE and the office of the President with questions on how the Power + Plan would work and how it could affect payouts to states from SMCRA's Title IV. We understand that the Administration would like to garner support from the watershed groups for this proposal.

SMCRA Fee Re-authorization

- We have worked with TU on the draft legislative language for the re-authorization of the Title IV fees for SMCRA and after some changes, have submitted that to the PA AML Campaign members for review. Along with language supporting a restructuring of the fees, we have included language to exempt the AML fund payouts from sequestration

and return funds that have been sequestered since 2013 to the states. We discussed this draft language at our July 24th AML Campaign meeting, came to consensus on the changes/additions, and have begun distributing this language to the states and select legislators. Ultimately, since this proposal would not move as a stand-alone bill, we would like to see it attached to another legislative vehicle, principally the AMLER portion of the Power + Plan.

Legislative language to create an OM&R Grant

- TU and WPCAMR have worked with OSMRE to come up with draft language to be proposed as a bill to amend SMCRA in order to provide for an OM&R grant program for non-profits. The idea behind the bill is simple, to provide grant funds from OSMRE to watershed groups or other non-profits to repair and/or rehabilitate existing treatment systems that are treating AMD. The funding source would be the federal share from the reclamation fees. There is a potential for TU, WPCAMR, or some other entities to apply for a grant under this program and use this funding to pay for treatment system repairs...similar to how we operate Quick Response. There would be administrative funding for WPCAMR if we were to be a grantee. We will take this proposed amendment to SMCRA to legislators to see if it will gain traction.

Sequestration

- Still goes on with PA losing funding from its annual Title IV grant. We understand that both sides of the political aisle want to remove sequestration as soon as possible. It's interesting to note that with the OSM proposed budget for FY2 2016, the additional funds proposed by the legislative proposal would likely be subject to sequestration if the legislative proposal passes and sequestration is still in effect.

OTHER ITEMS

Quick Response

We are currently expending funds from QR6 and QR7. We will likely be finishing up QR6 during the soon. Without a state budget, we will not be able to get our reimbursements for Quick Response. We will reimburse the Quick Response grantees as we are able but they are aware that if we don't have enough funds, we will have to do partial reimbursements until we can get cash flow moving once again (once we have a state budget).

2015 Statewide AMR Conference

The 2015 annual conference was held June 25th and 26th in State College. Anne will provide a more in-depth update of the conference in her report.

OM&R Workgroup

We continue to work with Amy Wolfe from TU as part of the OM&R Workgroup to fashion a proposal that addresses the OM&R need for treatment systems not in Qualified Hydrologic Units. We have received some positive comments from our government agency partners.

Administrative

Without a state budget we will not be able to receive 3319 reimbursements from DEP. We are hopeful that we will have a state budget by the end of August so our backlog of reimbursements will be processed.

2014 Financial Audit

Our 2014 financial audit was completed and tax forms sent to the IRS. I have a few copies of our audit here at our meeting.

Meetings

- PA AML Campaign, Huntingdon
- 2015 Annual AMR Conference
- Field site recon trip with DEP Ebensburg