



Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation

Strategic Plan

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Environmentally unsound, unregulated mining practices occurring from the mid 1800's through 1977 have left a horrendous legacy of scarred landscapes, health and safety hazards, and degraded waters of monumental proportions throughout Pennsylvania's coal regions. Recovering from the impacts of abandoned mining operations will incur a price tag measured in billions of dollars and a timeframe measured in decades. The pace of reclamation efforts and the scope of problems addressed have been inadequate to satisfy many of those forced to live and cope with these problems.

The Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation (WPCAMR) is a coalition of 24 conservation districts in the bituminous coal fields of Western Pennsylvania formed to advance the cause of reclamation of abandoned mine lands and degraded waters.

Vision

WPCAMR will be a leader in the reclamation of areas adversely impacted by past mining practices.

Mission

Our purpose is to encourage and implement the reclamation of abandoned mine lands and degraded waters of Western Pennsylvania. This includes returning abandoned mine lands to productive use, improving water quality, and reducing hazards to health and safety, thereby improving the local economy and enhancing the quality of life. The Coalition will work in alliance with individuals or organizations, public or private.

Organization

WPCAMR is incorporated as a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation. Its Board of Directors is comprised of delegates, one each from its member conservation districts, and the following officers: president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. General membership is open to organizations and individuals. Meetings are held quarterly.

The organization is staffed with 2 full-time paid positions: the Regional Coordinator (Bruce Golden) and Watershed Coordinator (Deb Simko). Since 1994, the majority of operating expenses have been derived from an EPA Section 319 grant as administered through PA DEP's Bureau of Watershed Management. In recent years a variety of projects taken on by WPCAMR have been made possible from other state and federal grant programs, most notably Growing Greener. Other sources of funding include grants from non-governmental organizations and from membership dues. Intern programs such as AmeriCorps have also expanded WPCAMR's capacity to offer services.



History and Background

The Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation (WPCAMR) came into being in 1981 when a Western Pennsylvania group intent on improving the devastation resulting from over a century's worth of unregulated coal mining acted upon their frustrations. Comprised of conservation district leaders, federal conservation professionals, and other conservation-minded individuals, the group believed more resources should be made available and applied to the massive abandoned mine reclamation issues of the region.

Initially, their goal was to obtain more money for the Rural Abandoned Mine Program (RAMP), a federal program designed to address AMR. Through advocacy and outreach efforts and by involving local officials, communities, state and federal agencies, the group was successful in obtaining RAMP funding for western PA. The model based on partnering proved to be quite practical and effective. As one successful land reclamation project after another came to fruition, state and federal agencies slowly came to embrace the approach. Over time, WPCAMR began to place an elevated emphasis on the then largely neglected issue of degraded water quality due to abandoned mine drainage (AMD). Other avenues to providing the necessary resources were also identified, including the use of the PL-566 law to provide funding and resources for AMD projects. In spite of the successes with the RAMP program in PA, it ultimately faded out of the picture because of lack of support nationally. However, the groundwork laid throughout the 80's and into the 90's by the all-volunteer organization paved the way for other opportunities.

In 1994, a financial breakthrough came from EPA's Non-Point Source Section 319 program as administered through PA DEP's Bureau of Watershed Management. Funding provided the means to hire WPCAMR's first employee, Mark Killar, as the Regional Coordinator. Urging local support and partnerships and starting with small, doable projects as the model to follow in building local sustainability, Killar provided support to fledgling local groups interested in solving AMD problems. DEP was encouraged by the approach and lent financial and on-the-ground support to projects. At the same time, innovative passive treatment technologies were just coming on the scene as cost-effective alternatives for AMD treatment. As prototype projects succeeded, the model of locally driven passive treatment solutions gained momentum. From 1995 through 1997 WPCAMR coordinated 18 passive treatment demonstration projects involving federal, state, and county agencies and local watershed associations and partners. In this timeframe, a second paid position of Watershed Coordinator was funded by the 319 program, further expanding WPCAMR's ability to help build local capacity through the establishment and nurturing of watershed associations. Teamwork, partnerships, and a "ground-up" approach developed over the years by conservation districts proved to be very successful.



History and Background (cont.)

As more and more systems were proposed, another issue increasingly came into play: landowner liability. To insulate and encourage landowners to participate in allowing passive treatment systems to be built on their properties, WPCAMR played a key role in the establishment of the “Good Samaritan” legislation. WPCAMR was also instrumental in the formation of the Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation in the anthracite coal region and the National Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation. WPCAMR also participated in successful advocacy efforts to reenact AML funding legislation.

In 2000, WPCAMR took a major organizational step by formally incorporating as a non-profit corporation. While still maintaining close ties with Westmoreland Conservation District that hosted the Coalition through its formative years, the Coalition has increasingly grown more independent.

The Coalition broadened its service thrust when Growing Greener funding became available. Projects include: digitizing Scarlift abandoned mine site reports; locating, evaluating and prioritizing mine refuse piles; studying the formation of an Ohio River headwaters organization; creating the abandoned mine reclamation clearinghouse web site; and communicating with decision-makers concerning AMD issues. WPCAMR also administered the Regional Watershed Support Initiative grants program, aiding watershed associations in capacity building over a 5 year period.

Personnel changes have occurred throughout the years. Bruce Golden is now the Regional Coordinator and Deb Simko is the Watershed Coordinator. The service area is currently 24 counties which include almost 90 watershed associations. New issues continually appear such as bankruptcies of major coal operators, the flooding of mine pools in the Monongahela basin, and the uncertainties involved in the future of the AML Fund. In fact, through work initiated by WPCAMR, the Monongahela and Allegheny Rivers were named as the 5th most endangered river system in the nation by the American Rivers organization in 2004. WPCAMR continues to promote innovate and cost-effective treatment and reclamation technologies and the need to adequately address the operations and maintenance needs of existing treatment systems.

WPCAMR has a proud, award-winning history of over 20 years of leadership where the climate for reclamation has markedly improved and the pace of reclamation efforts, particularly with water quality issues, has greatly increased. The environment is indeed better because of all the partners who have been involved in the creation of this movement. But as the climate for reclamation has changed, so have the challenges. The Coalition must continue to adapt to the ever-changing circumstances to maintain a leadership role in abandoned mine reclamation.



Member Conservation Districts

- Allegheny
- Armstrong
- Beaver
- Bedford
- Blair
- Butler
- Cambria
- Cameron
- Centre
- Clearfield
- Clinton
- Elk
- Fayette
- Fulton
- Greene
- Huntingdon
- Indiana
- Jefferson
- Lawrence
- Mercer
- Somerset
- Venango
- Washington
- Westmoreland





Developing a Strategic Plan

Strategic Planning is a systematic process through which an organization agrees on and builds commitment among key stakeholders to priorities which are essential to its mission and responsive to the operating environment. A strategic plan is management tool to help an organization do a better job:

- choosing how to best respond to circumstances in an uncertain environment ;
- choosing specific priorities and selecting preferred ends and means;
- building commitment ; and
- asking “What business should we be in?” & “Are we doing the right thing?”

Recognizing challenges and opportunities in an ever-changing world, the WPCAMR Board of Directors committed the organization to develop a strategic plan as the centerpiece for guiding future directions.

Strategic Planning Committee

Volunteers from WPCAMR’s member conservation districts formed the Strategic Planning Core Group. WPCAMR staff also participated in the process facilitated by Janie French from the Canaan Valley Institute.

Conservation District	Core Group Member
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Allegheny	Ed Feigel
Beaver	Richard Smith
Cambria	Jacqueline Ritko
Clearfield	Hank Webster
Fayette	Doug Petro
Greene	Lisa Bennett
Huntingdon	Andy Patterson
Indiana	Tom Clark
WPCAMR President	LeeRoy Vatter
Jefferson	Bill Gresock
Lawrence	Henry Karki
Washington	Gary Stokum
Westmoreland	Gregory Phillips

WPCAMR Staff

Bruce Golden
Deb Simko
Sara Tumulty

Strategic Planning Facilitator

Janie French Canaan Valley Institute



Planning Process Timeline

June 2002

Decision made by WPCAMR Board of Directors to make investment in Strategic Planning Process with Janie French, Canaan Valley Institute as facilitator. Twelve conservation districts volunteered representation as the Strategic Planning Core Group. Process was to include several all-day sessions where the Core Group convened.

September 17, 2002

Core Group: Preliminary Vision and Mission Statements developed. Values, beliefs, allies, collaborators, constituency and stakeholders identified.

October 22, 2002

Core Group: SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis. Examined what trends may affect the work of WPCAMR in the next 3-5 years (identification of opportunities and threats), and what level of preparedness exists/is needed (identification of strengths and weaknesses).

November 26, 2002

Core Group: Development of strategic objectives and work plan.

March 7, 2003

Focus group of outside stakeholders convenes to offer suggestions for future directions.

March 13, 2003

Core Group: Overview and discussion of Focus Group priorities; development of action items and timeline; evaluation of progress; Final Core Group meeting.

June 2003

WPCAMR Staff meet with Janie French to prepare for writing draft strategic plan.

August 2004

Draft Strategic Plan presented to Board of Directors



Goals

Affirm role as credible, responsible leader in AMR

Affirm role as credible, responsible leader in AMR through a focused program exclusively devoted to environmental impacts of past mining practice.

Create a stronger, interdependent coalition

Create a stronger, interdependent coalition by uniting member conservation districts and WPCAMR in support of and participation in each other's respective activities.

Sustain the Coalition through adequate and diversified funding

Sustain the Coalition and provide quality services through an adequate diversified funding plan.

Promote the development of effective, efficient and practical solutions in AMR

Promote the development of effective, efficient and practical solutions in AMR by researching new methodologies and seeking funding for support of existing technologies and developing new technologies in collaboration with public/ private partnerships.



Plan in Action

Affirm role as credible, responsible leader in AMR

- Establish a public relations campaign to include the AMRClearinghouse web site, Abandoned Mine Posts online newsletter, Annual Report, the Strategic Plan, brochures, displays, conference attendance, speaking engagements, staged events, newspaper articles, spotlighting of success stories, and participation in conservation organizations
- Promote AMR and build organizational capacity of Watershed Associations through communication, regular meetings, technical assistance, workshops, etc.
- Continue to be a leader in organizing the PA Statewide Annual AMR Conference.
- Participate in statewide and regional organizations and taskforces such as PA Association of Conservation Districts, Mining Reclamation Advisory Board, NPS Liaison Workgroup, Citizens Advisory Council, and the PA Water Resources Planning Committee.

Create a stronger, interdependent coalition

- Seek conservation districts' official endorsement of WPCAMR's long range plan to promote unity, workload sharing, and funding increases and to avoid duplication of services.
- Strengthen current board by improved orientation efforts and communication plan.
- Increase organizational expertise and geographic influence through board member diversification.
- Make site visits to each conservation district to establish presence, promote organization/goals, recruit/increase membership involvement and strengthen communication network.
- Build synergy with member conservation districts through member attendance at quarterly meetings and staff visits to districts.



Plan in Action (cont.)

Sustain the Coalition through adequate and diversified funding

- Promote WPCAMR through public relations campaign to potential funders.
- Develop detailed annual operating budget.
- Secure funding through grants, corporate support/sponsorship, membership, and nonmember fee-for-service.
- Research various funding avenues; maintain lists of potential funders, grant programs, and partners.

Promote the development of effective, efficient and practical solutions in AMR

- Research improvements to existing technologies and the building and testing of new technologies.
- Collaborate with educational, private sector, government agencies and others regarding current and promising AMR projects.
- Collaborate in locating testing sites for new technologies via conservation district and DEP recommendation.
- Collaborate in conducting field evaluations and attaining landowner permission.
- Seek funding to test new technologies.
- Promote new technologies through outreach and education.
- Seek funding to support proper operation and maintenance practices for existing treatment systems through service programs.



The Future

Living with the scarred landscapes and fouled waters from over a century's worth of unregulated coal mining is just something we do in western Pennsylvania. These widespread problems were created over a long time period by a massive industry.

As we strive to ultimately eliminate these scars of the past, we must be patient... patient in that the job is so large and costly that billions of dollars will ultimately be expended over a period of decades. At the same time, we have to be impatient. The difference between getting the job done in 30 years versus 50 or more years requires a sense of urgency that has to be applied over the long term. We feel the obligation of restoring the environment to a healthy condition as one owed to current and future generations.

This strategic plan will guide WPCAMR in making a lasting difference in the environment, the economy, and ultimately the lives of people and things inhabiting western Pennsylvania as we champion abandoned mine reclamation.

Pennsylvania Constitution, Section 27, Article 1

“The people have a right to clean air, pure water,
and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic
and aesthetic values of the environment.

Pennsylvania's public natural resources are the common property
of all the people, including generations yet to come.

As trustees of these resources, the Commonwealth shall
conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all the people.”



Appendix

Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat (SWOT) Analysis Results and Rankings

A SWOT analysis is conducted to collect data to answer questions about the present and future of the Western PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation. SWOT analysis provides a framework for identifying critical issues. The results aide in

- Developing common perceptions.
- Identifying strengths, weaknesses, trends and conditions.
- Drawing on internal and external information.
- Keying on-going process for internal and external honesty and openness to changing conditions.

WPCAMR Responses

**Denotes high priority*

Internal Strengths

1. Knowledgeable staff
2. Central Office
3. Strong network of contacts
4. 20 year history
5. Dedicated Board
6. Meeting Goals when money is there
7. Good working relationship w/ watershed assns.
8. Focused on issue
9. Membership diversity
10. Regional representation
11. Staff communication skills
12. Good funding
13. Relationship w/ DEP
14. Being an advocate for \$ AML
15. Provide \$ to watershed assns.
16. Good Ed. Source
17. Successful track record of accomplishments
18. Good equipment inventory
19. Have watershed coordinator
20. Non profit status
21. Non regulatory
22. Locally governed

Organizational Weaknesses

1. **Not a clear sense of program direction***
2. Poor communication about who we are
3. Staff size
4. Lack of Volunteers
5. **Board recruitment & development***
6. Diversity of funding (Included under opportunity & threat)
7. Staff over workload
8. Not aggressive on getting projects on the ground
9. **Disconnect between organization and districts***
10. Staff not visiting districts on regular basis
11. Logistics of getting representation from large geographic area
12. Travel logistics to meet with constituents
13. No committee system to involve people
14. Not all conservation Districts committed to active participation
15. Lack of assets (operating budget & no capital)
16. Physical space could limit growth
17. Central office location (Greensburg)
18. Turn over in staff
19. Ties with DEP
20. No evaluation system for measurable results

External Opportunities

1. Growing Greener funding
2. **Conservation District System***
3. **Other potential funding sources***
4. Chance for industry to improve image
5. Access to technical expertise
6. **Demonstrating new technologies and approaches***
7. Legislative Contacts as Champions
8. Tap into national & global network
9. Interface with big variety of partners (non traditional)
10. Asset Development
11. Developing solutions to complex problems on a regional basis
12. Water resource legislation
13. Restoration industry as an economic boost
14. Recreation and tourism opportunities
15. Value added approaches
16. New academic standards to address education
17. Partnerships (townships, landowners, watershed associations)
18. Getting WPCAMR agenda tied to other organizations agendas
19. Volunteer organizations like Americorp
20. Academic institutions

Potential Threats

1. **Duplication of services by other competitors***
2. Organizational sustainability of W.A.
3. Change in political climate
4. **Lack of funding***
5. Poor economic outlook
6. Public apathy
7. Loss of staff by outside organizations
8. Lack of present political support
9. Negative legislation
10. National issues such as terrorism
11. SMCRA reauthorization
12. AML Trust fund reauthorization
13. Distrust of WPCAMR because of relationship w/DEP
14. AMD issue becomes low priority to other issues
15. Industry bankruptcy
16. WPCAMR absorbed by another organization
17. Territorial agendas
18. Public mistrust of coal industry
19. Public mistrust of government
20. **Perception that WPCAMR isn't providing measurable value***
21. Perception of WPCAMR as competitor for funding.

Issues and goals

Issues and goals usually come from:

- **Strengths** to build on
- **Weaknesses** to be strengthened
- **Opportunities** to be taken
- **Threats** to be avoided

Priority issues from the SWOT Analysis were grouped by common themes and goal statements were drafted.

Goals are simply a clearer statement of the visions, specifying the accomplishments to be achieved if the vision is to become real.

I. Issue: Not a clear sense of program direction; duplication of services by other competitors; perception WPCAMR isn't providing measurable value.

Goal Statement: Affirm role as credible, responsible leader in AMR through a focused program exclusively devoted to environmental impacts of past mining practice.

II. Issue: Disconnect between organization and districts; Conservation District System as an opportunity to achieve organizational goals; board recruitment and development.

Goal Statement: Create a stronger, interdependent coalition by uniting member conservation districts and WPCAMR in support of and participation in each other's respective activities.

III. Issue: Lack of funding; other potential funding sources

Goal Statement: Sustain the Coalition and provide quality services through an adequate diversified funding plan.

IV. Issue: Demonstrating new technologies and approaches

Goal Statement: Promote the development of effective, efficient and practical solutions in AMR by researching new methodologies and seeking funding for support of existing technologies and developing new technologies in collaboration with public/ private partnerships.

Action Plans

Actions plans specify the actions needed to address each of the top organizational issues and to reach each of the associated goals, who will complete each action and according to what timeline.

Goal: Affirm role as credible, responsible leader in AMR through a focused program exclusively devoted to environmental impacts of past mining practice.

What is to be done?	Why do it?	What are the major steps?	Who will do them?	When will they be done?	How will we know they are done or we are successful?
Establish a public relations campaign.	To promote WPCAMR	-Promote web site -Abandoned Mine Posts -Annual Report -Speaking engagements -Success stories -Staged events -Newspaper articles -Produce Brochures	staff staff staff/members staff/members staff/members staff/members staff/members	Continual / Weekly Continual / Weekly Annual Monthly Annual	Web site hits Web statistics / feedback # distributed # delivered / # people reached #events / # participants Articles
Meet with watershed associatins	-To promote AMR -Build capacity	-Establish need website mailing AMD Other meetings -Develop content -Workshop	Staff/members W/S (CD's) Enlist appropriate people based on expertise	Quarterly	# responses #participants evaluation instrument
Continue to co-sponsor Annual Statewide AMR Conference	To advance state of art, educate, and encourage free flow of ideas.	Work together with conference planning committee in planning the event	Staff, conference planning committee, other stakeholders	Monthly meetings, followup work throughout year	participants at conference, evaluation instrument
Participate in orgs, committees, taskforces, etc related to AMR	To stay informed, to contribute to AMR issues, and to establish a presense.	Attend meetings and other follow-up work	Staff/members	Ongoing	Information gleened or contributed, # meetings attended
Deliver workshops, technical assistance, and other educational programs / materials	To disseminate AMR related information and know-how, and to establish a presense.	Develop and deliver assistance programs, presentations, etc.	Staff/members	Ongoing	#participants evaluation instrument

Goal: Create a stronger, interdependent coalition by uniting member conservation districts and WPCAMR in support of and participation in each other's respective activities.

What is to be done?	Why do it?	What are the major steps?	Who will do them?	When will they be done?	How will we know they are done or we are successful?
CD's officially endorse WPCAMR's long range plan	-Unity -share workload -increase funding -avoid duplication	-ask for participation, input in plan, review draft -present at board meeting -focus group	Delegate, alternate, exec. director	Ongoing, w/in 3 mo. of adoption	CD Resolutions
More informed board	-participation -share workload -feel productive	-develop orientation plan -orientation of new members -regular email, newsletters (communication plan)	Staff, core group, exec. committee, former board	Plan – ASAP Ongoing, annually, (board change)	More participation, less turnover, additional district support / resources
More diversified board	-special expertise -partners -spread geographic influence	-identify ideal composition -identify who -recruit	Exec. committee, Nominating committee	This year Ongoing	-more expertise -more funding -geographic spread
Meet regularly with CD's	-To promote Synergy	-Get member CD's to WPCAMR Qtrly Meetings	CD members / Staff Staff / member CD	Qtrly	#new members #attending mtg.
Visit each conservation district	-communication -PR -establish a presence -recruit new members	-establish initial contact -schedule meeting to sell coalition -develop mechanism for continual contact -communication w/ new members	Staff Board member CD	Complete – 2 years staff visit / bi-weekly	Feedback, meeting attendance, participation, new board members # visits

Goal: Sustain the Coalition and provide quality services through a diversified funding plan.

What is to be done?	Why do it?	What are the major steps?	Who will do them?	When will they be done?	How will we know they are done or we are successful?
Promote WPCAMR to potential sources of support	To inform publics of what we do and have done	Develop package(s) aimed at sources of support; campaign to promote WPCAMR	Staff	Annually	To be presented to board and approved and if they generate funds
Develop annual operating budget	To know how much money we need	Determine 1. salary costs 2. health care costs Total expenses for year	Staff	Annually	Plan presented to board and approved
Develop pie chart for percentages of monies needed	To show where monies should come from	Deciding what % comes from public & private funds	Staff/ members	Annually	To be presented to board and approved
Research possible sources of funding	To determine possible sources of support	Visit libraries, explore federal, state, foundation programs.	Staff/members	Ongoing	# of plausible AMR funding sources identified
Raise money	To improve our ability to perform our mission	-Write grants -contact corp. -distribute brochures -promote membership -charge fees to non-members (develop structure)	Office staff or selected board members (fund raising committee) form one if necessary	ASAP Probably will develop over 3 yr. period	By amount of monies received

Goal: Promote the development of effective, efficient and practical solutions in AMR by researching new methodologies and seeking funding for support of existing technologies and developing new technologies in collaboration with public/ private partnerships.

What is to be done?	Why do it?	What are the major steps?	Who will do them?	When will they be done?	How will we know they are done or we are successful?
Research & find potential new technologies	Provide for potential new treatment systems	Contact -Universities -Private Sector -Other counties	Staff	1 year	Establish a library of knowledge 1 central library at WPCAMR
Locate potential testing sites for new technologies	Locate funding Establish demo sites	-CD's & DEP suggest testing sites -Field evaluation -Landowner permission -Seek funding	Staff Districts DEP	1 ½ years	20 Demo sites established
Locate funding	To build, demonstrate, and promote the new technologies	Make application -government funds -foundation -industry	Staff Districts DEP	2 years	Funding obtained for 2 test systems per year
Build systems	To test the new technology	-Engineering design -Contracts -Construction	Staff Districts DEP	3 years	2 systems built
Test systems	Establish efficiency, effectiveness, and practicality of the system	Sampling; monitoring; costs; maintenance; reports & (results); conclusions	Staff Districts DEP	5 years	Final reports of results and conclusions on 2 systems / yr.
Outreach and education	Promote the new technologies	Workshops; tours; press releases; programs; media coverage	Staff Districts	3-5 years	Completed workshops, tours, etc. 4 per year
Support O&M of existing treatment systems	Sustain systems, protect investment & the environment.	Devlop support programs, seek funding	Staff	Ongoing	# of participating systems, # of functioning systems