

WPCAMR Regional Coordinator's Report

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LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

STATE

- **SB111**

Amends the Surface Mining Conservation and Reclamation Act adding language requiring the following to be transferred by the Department of Environmental Protection into the Reclamation Fee O&M Trust Account: civil penalties collected for a violation of The Clean Streams Law which is any manner connected with or related to coal mining activities; and moneys collected as a result of a violation of any rule, regulation or order of the department or condition of any permit issued under The Clean Streams Law which is in any manner connected with or related to a coal mining activity. Further provides all of these civil penalties and moneys shall be used to pay for construction costs and operation and maintenance costs associated with treating post-mining pollution discharges at ABS Legacy Sites.

SB111 was introduced on Jan 18, 2023 and referred to Environmental Resources and Energy in the Senate the same day. Still no movement on this bill.

- **HR185**

PA House Rep Webster (D) introduced a resolution to direct the Joint State Government Commission to study the usage of geothermal energy in abandoned mining locations. By way of background, geothermal energy uses the consistent heat output of the subsurface earth to create energy or regulate temperatures in residential, commercial, and industrial capacities. HR185 passed a Committee Roll Call Vote on October 16, 2023. This resolution was previously introduced in 2022.

<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/Legis/CSM/showMemoPublic.cfm?chamber=H&SPick=20230&cosponId=41187>

<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billinfo.cfm?year=2023&sind=0&body=H&type=R&bn=185>

FEDERAL

House Bills

- **Community Reclamation Partnerships Act (CRPA) H.R.1146 (*Previous number: HR 315*)**

This was the third iteration of this bill and still no major movement. WPCAMR had supported CRPA but recognizes it needs more work to be relevant to our community. It was reported out of the House Committee on Natural Resources by unanimous consent on April 25, 2022. It had gone no further. Within the Senate, there didn't seem to be any interest.

The bill was re-introduced in Committee in the fall of 2023. Given the past history of this bill, it is unlikely it will move forward.

Somewhat related to this topic is the Hard Rock Good Sam bill (S 2781) introduced by Sens Risch (R-ID) and Heinrich (D-NM) that made it out of the Senate Committee and now needs to go through the House. It has had broad bi-partisan support from the Senate. This bill, in order to go through the House, needs to go through several committees of jurisdiction. We understand that one of the chairs of these House committees doesn't like Good Sam bills like this and isn't likely to help it along. TU has been the main push for this Hard Rock Good Sam bill. The proposed program is a "pilot" program which would provide no more than 15 remediation permits. If this goes through and is successful, it may be a model for a coal Good Sam bill for the future.

OSMRE News

Sharon Buccino from Wyoming has been appointed Principal Deputy Director for OSMRE. She will fulfill the duties of the director since there is no OSMRE director and the existing Deputy Director cannot fulfill those duties.

Federal Budget

The Federal government passed a continuing resolution in January through March 1st for some agencies and until March 8th for other agencies. Appropriators in the House and Senate must now negotiate 12 bills under spending levels agreed to earlier in January by those deadlines.

Reauthorization Work

With reauthorization having passed and the Infrastructure funding secured along with the STREAM Act passed, the AML Campaign continues to meet with regard to

understanding and potentially mitigating issues surrounding implementation of the Infrastructure funding and the STREAM Act.

OTHER ITEMS

Quick Response

We are still expending funds from QR9 and are taking applications for funding to conduct urgent repairs to water quality BMPs, not just for AMD-related projects but other water quality BMPs as well. We didn't use up all the QR9 funding in 2023 so I requested and received a second extension to that grant until December of 2024.

We also still have Quick Response 10 to begin expending on projects.

We also have a Watershed Cooperative Agreement Program grant from OSMRE, to provide funding for materials for Quick Response-type projects that deal only with AMR. This grant is only for AMD projects.

Related to OMR, as I reported at our November meeting, OSMRE has funding to begin a passive treatment OM&R grant program different from WCAP. We understand there is some confusion as to whether the funding they have is to put the program together internally (as IMCC has understood) or to actually grant out to nonprofits to do work. We will continue to watch what happens with this.

2024 Statewide AMR Conference

The conference will be held October 22 – 24th at Ramada State college. Anne will have more information about our conference and the planning.

Administrative

I continued to perform the usual administrative duties and work with our Treasurer Kelly Williams on account reconciliations, check signing, etc.

Also, we received \$2,000 ARIPPA award match from our anonymous donor. \$1,800 goes to WPCAMR region ARIPPA award with \$200 going toward admin. ARIPPA Award application period is now open.

We are also participating in a grant-funded project (along with SRI and EPCAMR) to determine

the watershed community's needs with regard to administering IJA and/or AMLER projects.

Additional Items

New director for FPW. Deb Nardone is the new director of Foundation for PA Watersheds as of November 6th.

DEP Secretary Negrin has resigned. The interim acting Secretary is Jessica Shirley.

Other Meetings

- PA annual AMR conference planning committee
- Weekly AML Campaign phone calls ongoing.
- Various phone calls from watershed groups and/or others.