

Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation

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February 13, 2007

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Robert L. Eppley, President
WPCAMR
52 Oakland Ave.
Homer City, PA 15748

Dear Secretary McGinty,

The November 2006 meeting of the WPCAMR focused on the issue of Operations, Maintenance, and Replacement for AMD treatment systems. More than 30 people in attendance were interested in finding solutions to funding concerns for OM&R of PA's more than 200 systems. As you are well aware, the cost OM&R is indeed a difficult problem that we believe must ultimately rely substantially on public funding if these systems are to continue to reliably improve waters of the Commonwealth. The lack of secure funding will surely result in environmental backslides and a waste of the AMD investments made by the Commonwealth. Although some of the meeting's discussion involved the venting of frustrations by Conservation Districts and watershed groups in finding funding sources for OM&R, most of the meeting was focused on finding solutions. Cooperation among many entities, with the DEP as the most central, was seen as a major requirement for success.

Following those discussions, a proper motion was made and an official WPCAMR resolution was adopted which would recommend to DEP the formation of two action groups to deal with OM&R. The groups would have the following objectives:

1. To better quantify the funding problems by expanding upon the work of the original DEP Workgroup.
2. To better quantify the benefits of improvements in water quality resulting from treatment systems and to identify implementation mechanisms.

To clarify the role of planning group 2, it was the general feeling of the group that the downstream economic returns of these passive treatment systems as witnessed by increased tourism, reduced drinking water treatment costs, etc. are only beginning to be fully appreciated. These benefits alone may be more than enough to justify OM&R costs when addressing funding sources. At the time of the meeting, a state legislative solution seemed to be the most plausible source of dedicated OM&R funding. However, with the passage of the SMCRA Title IV amendments including the AMD 30% set-aside provision, another potential funding source has clearly emerged.

We are requesting that you act on the above resolution, relying on your judgment as how to best implement the recommendations. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the OM&R situation in detail and to assist in efforts to resolve the situation.

As always, we appreciate your thoughtful consideration and look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Eppley, President
C: WPCAMR, B. Hoffnar