

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. No movement on this bill.

- **HR185**

Recently, 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, 21023. 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. A type of Federal Environmental Good Samaritan bill introduced in the House and reported out of committee, most of the work on this language has been done through the Interstate Mining Compact Commission, TU and the States. This continues to be very promising. This bill proposes a way to protect watershed groups working on AMD by amending SMCRA. 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 doesn't seem to be any interest yet. We still do not know if it will be re-introduced in this Congress. However, there has been some movement toward a Hard Rock bill which is entirely separate from our efforts.

WPCAMR's 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 won'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 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. .

Related to OMR, as I reported at our August 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.

AMD Passive Treatment Training

We are very pleased to announce that we have completed the passive treatment course for conservation districts with Jon Smoyer (DEP) and OSMRE staff for three days in September. We got an amazing response to our call for registrations. We had 24 participants associated with Conservation Districts and we hope to have another class in the spring/summer of 2024. We received a \$15,000 grant from FPW to cover mileage, lodging, and food for participants.

2023 Statewide AMR Conference

The 2023 conference was held October 24,25,26th at Altoona. 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.

I got our materials together for our annual financial audit/review for 2022 and submitted it to Henninger Associates.

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.

Additional Items

New director for FPW. Deb Nardone will be the new director of Foundation for PA Watersheds as of November 6th according to John Dawes.

DEP Secretary Negrin is on medical leave until his resignation takes effect. 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.
- Zoom with RES staff to introduce our two organizations