



Thank you, Chairman Lowenthal and ranking member Stauber and thank you to Rep. Cartwright and all the other cosponsors of HR1733 and HR1734.

I appreciate the opportunity to be here today, on behalf of Rural Action, and describe not only the need that we see in our region but the opportunity and excitement that has also started growing in our towns. We are a regional nonprofit in Appalachian Ohio. Our mission is to build a more just economy by developing the region's assets in environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable ways.

### **The perspective from Ohio**

I live outside of a village named "Mineral City", if that gives you any indication of our economic history. We were built around coal, and experienced the subsequent boom and bust cycle like many communities based around extractive industries.

My grandfather delivered coal to homes, and my great-grandfather was a miner in the exact same mines that Rural Action is now working to clean up. My privileges of an education, a safe home, and food on my table came in part because of the hard work of my family members in the coal industry and the rich natural resources of our region. I want my son to have the same opportunity to pursue a career tied to the ample natural resources of our home. HR 1733, the RECLAIM Act, and HR1734 - the Reauthorization of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA), would allow for those opportunities to happen.

Rural Action works to increase local control over the region's rich assets and to give power to the people who are committed to this place. Part of our core work has been reclaiming abandoned coal mines. We have organized community groups based around watershed restoration since 1995. And we have taken it a step further, partnering with state and federal governments to oversee millions of dollars of investment in clean-up projects. We know this work is valuable and successful, because we have seen it in action.

The need for AML reclamation is great. Ohio has over 1 million acres of abandoned mine land and more than 1,300 miles of acid-mine drainage polluted streams<sup>1</sup>. eAMLIS records show \$500 million dollars in inventory waiting to be reclaimed in our state. Where I live in Tuscarawas County alone it would take more than \$37 million dollars to clean up the AML hazards. Ohio only received \$5.1 million in it's annual AML grant this year. The increase included in HR1734, to increase minimum program states to a \$5 million dollar annual grant instead of \$3 million dollars, would help ensure that our work continues and reclamation happens where it is most needed. We need to reauthorize SMCRA now or risk falling even further behind.

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<https://ohiodnr.gov/wps/portal/gov/odnr/discover-and-learn/safety-conservation/about-ODNR/mineral-resources-management/reclamation-restoration/aml-reclamation-programs>

## Abandoned Mine Land reclamation can help build a diverse economic future in Appalachia.

Communities around Appalachia are working hard to change the narrative of our region; we are turning what was once liabilities into assets. The diversity of projects supported with the Abandoned Mine Land Economic Development Pilot (Pilot) program in Ohio reflects the future of the Appalachian economy.

With funding from the Pilot program, Rural Action is building True Pigments, a company that is improving socio-economic prosperity by converting pollution and waste into local wealth, increasing employment opportunities, and expanding the local tax base. Their factory will be built atop the largest acid mine drainage seep in Ohio, removing the iron oxide that currently pollutes our stream, and turning it into a pigment to be used in paint, building materials, and more. We will be treating 1,000 gallons of pollution per minute, creating a saleable commodity and simultaneously restoring seven miles of stream once polluted by AMD. This exciting project will be the first of its kind in the world, and is driven by a decades-long partnership between Rural Action, Ohio University, and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.



The restoration of our land and rivers is helping grow a thriving market in outdoor recreation and ecotourism. Pilot funding is also supporting the creation of the Bailey's Mountain Bike Trail, weaving 88 miles of a world-class multi-use trail between abandoned mine land features. With Pilot funding, dangerous mine openings and dilapidated mining buildings left from decades before are being cleaned up. The communities that will serve as "trail towns" and gateways to this region are having blighted areas restored and seeing renewed pride in places that were still recently dangerous liabilities. This project alone has already spurred the creation of twelve new restaurants, lodging, and general retailers in the small communities it touches—employing 26 local residents. AML reclamation is addressing dangerous health and safety features in our region, making our communities safer to live in and travel to.

Recognizing that our region needs to have diverse employment opportunities to create widespread prosperity, traditional economic development projects are being supported through Pilot as well. In Cambridge, Ohio, a successful industrial park was almost completely leased. The remaining parcel was over an abandoned underground mine, dissuading companies from locating on the site. Rural Action helped facilitate a project to fill in the mine voids and stabilize the ground, resulting in a safer building site. The site has already been leased to FedEx.

The RECLAIM Act would help connect our communities, giving them refreshed pride in their homeplaces and encouraging businesses and manufacturing back to our hills. Ohio's success with Pilot funding is due in large part to a state agency that has prioritized transparency and communication with the communities in which they work. The guidance in RECLAIM would encourage local community input in deciding reclamation and development projects. It would continue this type of innovative reclamation that paves the way for new development in a region that needs it so much.

Rural Action supports greater alignment between federal and state agency funding, so that complicated projects can get as much support as possible. In particular, funding through the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Economic Development Agency, and the Environmental Protection Agency could—when paired with RECLAIM, support all aspects of innovative development projects. The RECLAIM Act, unlike Pilot, will not support the infrastructure needs of a project. We need the other agencies listed here to allow for matching funding in order to offer the greatest support to the projects that will make the most impact in our region

**Abandoned Mine Land reclamation is in line with the national economic transition, paving the way for a just transition for impacted communities.**

Abandoned mine land reclamation is an environmental justice issue. As the energy industry shifts dramatically away from coal production to a more diverse portfolio of both fossil fuels and clean energy, workers and communities dependent on old energy sources will face an uncertain future.

The RECLAIM Act would create more than 13,000 jobs per year<sup>2</sup>. Reclamation and remediation of AML sites will require a sizable and skilled workforce and can immediately re employ former coal employees. We should prioritize miners and power plant workers for these types of “green collar” reclamation and remediation jobs whenever possible. There will be increased demand for supporting staff to facilitate reclamation work—the geologists, biologists, engineers, chemists who help ensure project success. These are the well paying, family-supporting jobs that our region so badly needs.

We know these numbers are large, but we believe that they are accurate. With our work on the Reclaiming Appalachia Coalition, the Pilot-funded projects we have helped secure have leveraged almost \$9.5 million dollars in private matching investment and are helping to create more than 400 jobs<sup>3</sup>. See the attached tables for project-specific information.

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<sup>2</sup> Page 28 - <https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/PERI-stimulus-jobs.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Page 9 - [https://appvoices.org/resources/AML-RAC/AML\\_RAC\\_report-2020-b-low-res.pdf](https://appvoices.org/resources/AML-RAC/AML_RAC_report-2020-b-low-res.pdf)

The RECLAIM Act would allow for community leaders to help determine the future development that is best suited for their specific situation. The guidance in both RECLAIM and Reauthorization that necessitates the involvement of the communities where reclamation is happening is imperative. The long-term success of a project is deeply rooted in the community's acceptance and support of it. Rural Action emphasizes that local communities should have a leadership role in any AML reclamation project supported by RECLAIM, and should be consulted during the planning process of traditional reclamation supported through reauthorization of SMCRA.

**Abandoned Mine Land reclamation is successful and will need to continue into the future.**

All of this work is needed—Priority one, two, and three AML sites all affect the residents who live near them. In the Huff Run Watershed, where I live, only one fish species was found at what should have been the most biodiverse monitoring site in 1997. Since then, we have installed more than 20 AML reclamation projects in the drainage. Now we have found 26 species of fish at that same site, including two new species just last year. Our stream is still stained orange, but it certainly is not dead.

Rural Action specifically recognizes the need for ongoing support of priority three acid mine drainage (AMD) treatment projects. Hundreds of stream miles have been brought back to life with passive and active treatment projects. Even the most “passive” system will need ongoing maintenance, with new limestone added or vegetation cleared. We know that when systems go off line, streams suffer. In one study, with just two weeks of nontreatment when a lime doser was nonfunctional, the fish community of the receiving stream was still not recovered after a year and a half<sup>4</sup>.

Rural Action supports the language in the RECLAIM Act that would allow for 30% of project costs to be set aside for long-term maintenance and treatment of any AMD projects completed using RECLAIM funding. The long-term support of our nation's existing AMD treatment systems should be of utmost importance.

**Thank you for having this conversation today.**

It is vital that you pass reauthorization of SMCRA and RECLAIM, together, and then we need to figure out how we will continue to pay for AML as the energy industry continues to dramatically shift. How will we pay for these legacy impacts as part of a just transition for all of Appalachia and impacted energy workers and communities?

Please continue this conversation, and continue to bring in people like me, who are on the front lines of reclamation and reimagining what a new future holds for the places that we live and that we love.

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<sup>4</sup> The Lasting Impacts of Offline Periods in Lime Dosed Streams: A Case Study in Raccoon Creek, Ohio - <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/The-Lasting-Impacts-of-Offline-Periods-in-Lime-A-in-Kruse-Bowman/e24a332f169fb3fff15a93206f6c0633c6ed06e9>

## FUNDED PROJECTS

This report is the third in a series presented by the Reclaiming Appalachia Coalition. In it, you'll find a review of projects funded to date—now totaling over \$31 million in investment while creating an estimated 400 jobs.

TABLE 1: FUNDED PROJECTS 2019-2020

State	Year	Applicant	Project	Federal Pilot Award	Leveraged Resources	Total Project Investment
KY	2018	Kentucky River Area Development District	South Fork Elk View Campground	\$1,345,000	\$0	\$1,345,000
OH	2019	Ohio Department of Natural Resources	Moonville Trails	\$1,150,600	\$920,500	\$2,071,100
OH	2019	Rural Action and Ohio University	Truetown Paint Pigments	\$3,489,408	\$524,500	\$4,013,908
OH	2018	Ohio Department of Natural Resources	D.O. Hall Business Park Expansion	\$954,593	\$0	\$954,593
OH	2019	Ohio Department of Natural Resources	Wellston Recreation Complex	\$391,000	\$0	\$391,000
VA	2018	Scott County	Devils Fork	\$88,000	\$172,000	\$260,000
VA	2018	Russell County	Dante Revitalization	\$269,000	\$265,000	\$534,000
VA	2018	Wise County Industrial Development Auth.	SWVA Solar Springboard	\$500,000	\$4,100,000	\$4,600,000
VA	2019	People Inc.	Trammel	\$1,143,575	\$1,000,000	\$2,143,575
VA	2019	The Nature Conservancy	Clinch River Campgrounds	\$2,460,000	\$0	\$2,460,000
WV	2018	Friends of Cheat	RE-CREATE	\$3,014,000	\$536,000	\$3,550,000
WV	2018	Refresh Appalachia	A Food-Safe Processing Facility	\$4,000,000	\$1,358,000	\$5,358,000
WV	2019	Coalfield Development Corporation	Black Diamond Re-Use Center	\$0	\$600,000	\$600,000
<b>Total:</b>				<b>\$18,805,176</b>	<b>\$9,476,000</b>	<b>\$28,281,176</b>



**TABLE 2: CONSTRUCTION IMPACT 2019-2020**

State	Project	Final-demand Output	Final-demand Earnings	Final-demand Employment	Final-demand Value-added
KY	South Fork Elk View Campground	\$9,239,643	\$3,116,426	67.34	\$5,041,451
OH	Moonville Trails	\$2,822,002	\$976,716	21.83	\$1,546,682
OH	Truettown Paint Pigments	\$8,535,566	\$2,795,345	60.45	\$4,714,540
OH	D.O. Hall Business Park Expansion	\$2,920,444	\$685,842	14.14	\$1,359,595
OH	Wellston Recreation Complex	\$826,657	\$256,493	9.09	\$480,332
VA	Devils Fork	\$615,789	\$167,826	3.53	\$318,974
VA	Dante Revitalization	\$1,173,309	\$357,951	7.79	\$629,623
VA	SWVA Solar Springboard	\$8,054,196	\$1,673,651	29.70	\$4,534,019
VA	Trammel	\$2,696,320	\$782,248	17.42	\$1,374,616
VA	Clinch River Campgrounds	\$5,317,691	\$1,373,209	31.30	\$2,773,934
WV	RE-CREATE	\$7,407,911	\$990,947	46.32	\$4,066,084
WV	A Food-Safe Processing Facility	\$12,019,497	\$3,706,718	83.25	\$6,310,845
WV	Black Diamond Re-Use Center	\$1,119,193	\$323,166	7.11	\$590,409
<b>Total:</b>		<b>\$62,748,217</b>	<b>\$17,206,537</b>	<b>399.27</b>	<b>\$33,741,105</b>

To date, the Reclaiming Appalachia Coalition has provided technical assistance to dozens of local government entities and community organizations, resulting in the submission of more than \$54 million in grant applications. These partnerships have effectively secured over \$18.8 million in AML Pilot funds and leveraged approximately \$12.9 million in additional funds. This success has cemented our coalition as a thought leader and indispensable resource for communities in the field. As demonstrated in the succeeding pages, the development opportunities our partners are pursuing are diverse and bring valuable impact to our region.

