



March 25, 2009

The Honorable Dave Obey
U. S. House of Representative
Wausau Office
401 5th Street, Suite 406A
Wausau, WI 54403-5468

Dear Congressman Obey:

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Mining and Reclamation Advisory Board¹ (MRAB) to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. The MRAB is very concerned about a potential threat to the much-needed increase in funding for abandoned mine land reclamation in the Commonwealth.

A great potential benefit for Pennsylvania resulted from Congressional reauthorization of the Surface Mining Conservation and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) in December 2006. The new law provides a significant increase in funding available to the Commonwealth (and other eastern mining States) for reclamation of abandoned mine lands thereby reducing water pollution, restoring land and eliminating public safety hazards.

While we understand that an effort to eliminate \$21 million in Fiscal Year 2009 funding for the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Emergency Program has been addressed by a Continuing Resolution, we remain concerned about the need to protect against future funding cuts and against transferring responsibility for emergency situations to the states.

The Office of Surface Mining (OSM) currently administers the AML Emergency Program in Pennsylvania and Kentucky. Since 2002, the OSM has responded to approximately 775 emergency situations in Pennsylvania alone and has spent nearly \$24 million on emergencies.

The loss of federal emergency funds would require Pennsylvania to shift monies from other mine land reclamation projects. This additional burden will hamper our

¹ The Mining and Reclamation Advisory Board is authorized and organized pursuant to Section 18(g) of the Pennsylvania Surface Mining Conservation and Reclamation Act (Act 181 of 1984) as amended by Act 173 of 1992. The advisory board is charged to assist the Secretary of Environmental Protection to expend the funds for the purposes provided by this act and to advise the Secretary on all matters pertaining to surface coal mining and reclamation.

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ability to reclaim our huge inventory of high priority abandoned mine lands and address related mine drainage issues. In Pennsylvania, elimination of this program could result in a funding shortfall for AML projects of approximately \$3 million annually. In addition, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection estimates that the cost for Pennsylvania to administer the AML Emergency Program could be an additional \$2.5 million annually, further reducing project funds.

As a result, we respectfully request that you take appropriate action that would safeguard continued funding of the Office of Surface Mining AML Emergency Program.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



David Osikowicz
Mining and Reclamation Advisory Board

cc: Governor Rendell
Pa. Congressional Delegation
Norman D. Dicks, Chair
Michael K. Simpson, Ranking Minority Member