

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 5, 2026

Dear Chairs Collins and Cole, Vice Chair Murray, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

Coal mining communities across the country are grappling with the impacts of unreclaimed mines. While Congress made significant progress in remediating abandoned mine lands (AML) with the passage of the \$11.3 billion AML fund in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), the federal Office of Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Enforcement (OSMRE) must continue its mission to enforce federal reclamation standards on abandoned and active coal mines, including higher standards for mine reclamation on Tribal lands. Completed mine reclamation projects protect coal communities from polluting runoff and dangerous mine features, create new job opportunities and lower regional flood risk to protect lives and property from devastating floods.

The undersigned 47 organizations representing and working with coal mining communities across the country write to request that you use the FY 2027 appropriations process to provide OSMRE with the resources necessary to effectively execute their mission of protecting communities by ensuring complete and expedient site reclamation. Specifically, we ask you to include the following requests for OSMRE in your FY 2027 appropriations priorities:

1. **Protect the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act's (IIJA) investment into the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund from further cuts.** [P.L. 119-74](#) reallocated \$500 million from the IIJA fund to support wildland fire management at the Department of the Interior and general operations of the U.S. Forest Service (pg. 167). Coal communities across the country fought for the original \$11.3 billion investment in the IIJA after more than a century of polluting runoff, abandoned infrastructure and open mine portals impacted their health and economic opportunities. Today, the cost of full AML remediation has grown to nearly \$15 billion as states continue to update their records with OSMRE. This funding is intended to be released annually to allow for OSMRE to clean up features that were abandoned before passage of the 1977 Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act. We cannot treat the IIJA AML fund as a congressional slush fund; coal communities need this funding to clean up their land and water from the damaging history of coal mining and chart a new, locally-driven economic vision for the future.
2. **Fully fund OSMRE at \$132 million for Regulation and Technology, including \$79 million for regulatory grants to states and Tribes, and support OSMRE's mission with adequate staffing.** OSMRE monitors permitting, enforces rules and administers reclamation programs, like

the AML program, at mine sites. This work includes maintaining full regulatory authority for coal mining programs in some states and on all Tribal lands. For states that manage their own regulatory programs, OSMRE must still provide financial support for them to operate because of the high costs of important monitoring and enforcement activities. If states were forced to give up their regulatory primacy due to a lack of sufficient federal funding, the cost for OSMRE to administer all state programs would be significantly more expensive for federal taxpayers than the current state-federal cost share.

Given the historic IJA AML investment, the complicated challenge of reclaiming modern mines as coal companies continue to go bankrupt, the administration's reduction in OSMRE staff by 36% in 2025¹ and President Trump's efforts to increase domestic coal production, Congress must provide OSMRE with the necessary budget and staff to perform oversight, enforcement and administration of these programs that protect mining communities and fulfill the federal government's obligations to Tribes. Reductions in the agency's budget and staffing put coal communities in danger of increased flooding², landslides, polluted waterways and other mine-related disasters, as well as restricting local economic development, when the land is not properly reclaimed.

3. **Dedicate \$5 million to the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative (ARRI).** We are thrilled that P.L. 119-74 included \$500,000 for ARRI, the first time the program received direct federal funding. Increased reforestation of former mine lands reduces erosion, restores habitat for local wildlife and protects communities from increased runoff that exacerbates flooding. Because the cost of reforesting former mine lands can be as high as \$3,000 per acre, we understand the \$500,000 funding will be used primarily for program administration rather than actively planting more trees. In order to restore our forested landscapes with healthy and productive native forests that reduce local flood risk and include economically important tree species like white oak and hickories, Congress should increase its investment in ARRI to \$5 million for FY 2027.
4. **Allocate \$100,000 for OSMRE to conduct the study encouraged by the Senate Appropriations Committee in [S. Rept. 119-46](#).** We are grateful for the FY 2026 report language, but remain concerned that OSMRE will be unable to adequately complete this study with a shrinking budget and workforce.

Bonding requirements for modern coal mines are meant to avoid future development of abandoned mine lands. By understanding the risk of state bond pool insolvency, Congress will be better informed on necessary federal actions to lower the risk of a new generation of abandoned mines in coal country. Congress must provide OSMRE with the funding and staff necessary to complete this study to understand the risk of bond pool collapse and identify solutions to protect coal communities from the potential for generations of pollution.

¹ Badger, Emily, Francesca Paris and Alicia Parlapiano. "[220,000 Fewer Workers: How Trump's Cuts Affected Every Federal Agency](#)." *New York Times*, Jan. 9, 2026.

² McCausland, Phil. "[Abandoned mines and poor oversight worsened Kentucky flooding, attorneys say](#)." *NBC News*, Aug. 6, 2022.

Thank you for supporting the health, safety and economic vitality of coal mining communities. Our communities are focused on building new economic opportunities for the future, but we need Congress to support OSMRE so they can fulfill their obligations to protect our communities from reckless coal companies and mining practices, all while creating new job opportunities in reclamation.

Sincerely,

Appalachian Citizens' Law Center

Appalachian Voices

Action Together NEPA

The Alliance for Appalachia

Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance (ABRA)

Appalshop. Inc.

Appalachian Trail Conservancy

Berwick Arts Association

Center For Coalfield Justice

Citizens Coal Council

Chesapeake Climate Action Network Action Fund

Christians for the Mountains

Climate Justice Alliance

Conservation Voters of PA

Earthjustice

Eastern Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation (EPCAMR)

Friends of the Tug Fork River

Hip Hop Caucus

Kentucky Resources Council

Kentucky Riverkeeper

Kentucky Student Environmental Coalition

Kentucky Waterways Alliance

Keystone Development Center

Kids for Saving Earth

Landforce

Latino Farmers & Ranchers International, Inc.

Livelihoods Knowledge Exchange Network (LiKEN)

Mid-Ohio Valley Climate Action

Mountain Watershed Association

National Wildlife Federation
Ohio River Valley Institute
Pennsylvania Interfaith Power & Light
Pennsylvania Sustainable Business Network
ReImagine Appalachia
RiverWise
Roots of Unity Media
Sierra Club
Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards
Stewart Family Farms
SWPA Municipal Project Hub
The Tidewater Coalition
Three Rivers Waterkeeper
Tó Nizhóní Ání
Utility Workers Union of America, AFL-CIO
West Virginia AFL-CIO
West Virginia Environmental Council
West Virginia Land Trust
Working for Justice Ministry St. Paul's United Methodist Church Allison Park, PA