



S. 3957, The STREAM Act

The Safeguarding Treatment for the Restoration of Ecosystems from Abandoned Mines Act

U.S. Senators Bob Casey and Mike Braun

One of the most common threats posed by abandoned mine lands is the discharge of highly acidic water, known as acid mine drainage (AMD). AMD can have devastating effects on rivers and streams, eradicating ecosystems and contaminating groundwater and downstream water supplies. Further, abandoned mines negatively affect local economies, decreasing land values, reducing recreational opportunities and threatening the health and safety of individuals living in coalfield communities. Across Pennsylvania, 1.4 million people live within one mile of an abandoned mine site.

The Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Reclamation Program is the primary funding source to address AML sites. The fee-based program provides annual grants to states to assist in the remediation of abandoned mines that pose significant threats to public health, safety and the environment. AMD treatment is often addressed by building water treatment systems, which result in ongoing operation, maintenance and rehabilitation costs that endure in perpetuity. However, states often lack the financial ability to support these types of long-term liabilities, forcing them to forgo using AML funds on AMD abatement, which would otherwise be implemented. Fortunately, the AML Reclamation Program authorizes states to set aside up to 30 percent of their annual AML grant in an interest-bearing account to cover the long-term costs of AMD treatment facilities.

The recently-enacted Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provides an additional \$11.3 billion for the AML trust fund for state AML programs to use. However, the infrastructure law does not allow the same authority for states to set aside any of these funds for AMD treatment. Clean water is essential to local economies, particularly those that rely on recreation and tourism to support their livelihoods. Without the authority to set aside a portion of the infrastructure law's funding to cover the long-term costs of addressing AMD, the amount available for long-term liabilities will dwindle, thereby severely impairing the states' ability to make further progress in eliminating AMD.

The ***STREAM Act*** would ensure that AML grants from the infrastructure law can be utilized in the same way as grants allocated from the AML Trust Fund. Specifically, this bill would:

- Authorize states to set aside up to 30 percent of their annual IJA-AML grant into an account for the treatment and abatement of acid mine drainage
- Require annual reporting on the use and amount of funds set aside for acid mine drainage abatement

This bill is endorsed by the following organizations: Appalachian Citizens' Law Center, Appalachian Voices, Appalshop, Black Warrior Riverkeeper, Clean Power Lake County, Clearfork Community Institute, Coal River Group, Defenders of Wildlife, Dunkard Creek Watershed Assn., Inc., Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation (EPCAMR), Eco-Justice Collaborative, Friends for Environmental Justice, Friends of Blackwater, Inc., Friends of Deckers Creek, Friends of the Cheat, Guardians of the West Fork River Watershed, Illinois Environmental Council, Indiana Wildlife Federation, Kentucky Conservation Committee, Kentuckians For The Commonwealth, Mountain Association, National Wildlife Federation, PennFuture, Powder River Basin Resource Council, Prairie Rivers Network, Preston County (WV) Chamber of Commerce, Rural Action, Sierra Club, Statewide Organizing for Community ePowerment (TN), Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning, Upper Mon River Association, West Virginia Rivers Coalition, West Virginia Water Research Institute.