

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON 
NATURAL RESOURCES
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Mining Package

In the wake of the EPA Animas River spill, the Committee on Natural Resources Majority is introducing a package that addresses systemic problems in mining development and reclamation. The reforms address the changing landscape of mining education, the neglect of scientific expertise and safety in mine reclamation and orphaned oil and gas well sites by federal agencies, and the lack of incentives for new funding sources and private-sector supported activities in abandon mine reclamation.

H.R. 3734, the “*Mining Schools Enhancement Act (MSEA)*,” introduced by Rep. Hardy of Nevada:

According to the National Academy of Sciences, approximately 70 percent of the mining industry’s technical leaders will reach retirement age within the next 10 to 15 years and there are few experienced engineers available to replace them. In addition, there has been a steady reduction in mining and mineral engineering programs across the country with just 14 accredited programs in 2014.

This deficiency in expertise is exemplified by the fact that out of EPA’s 15,326 employees, none are mining engineers.

Decreases in federal research funding, low student enrollment, reduction in state support, are among the factors in the decline of mining engineering programs.

This bill invests in the next generation by amending the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act to distribute 70% of the funding made available for the Applied Science Tech Transfer Program to ABET accredited Mining Schools. These research grants are designed to include significant involvement from undergraduate and graduate students to rebuild a strong cohort with the necessary technical expertise to teach future generations and innovate on the frontlines of the private and public sector.

H.R. 3844, the “*Energy and Minerals Reclamation Foundation Establishment Act*,” introduced by Rep. Hice of Georgia:

This bill establishes the Energy and Mineral Reclamation Foundation to facilitate cleanup of abandoned mine lands (AML) and orphaned oil and gas well sites and help the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and non-profit organizations raise funds for the purpose of AML cleanup on both federal and non-federal lands. The freedom of the Foundation to solicit contributions from the general public will significantly increase the ability to guide money towards actions that will enhance and improve the quality of the environment.

H.R. 3843, the “*Locatable Minerals Claim Location and Maintenance Fees Act*,” introduced by Subcommittee Chairman Lamborn of Colorado:

The bill establishes Good Samaritan provisions that incentivize private sector remediation of abandoned mine land. This directs the EPA to create ‘Good Samaritan’ permits which provide limited liability protections for industry and non-profit groups equipped with the technical expertise to deal competently with abandoned mine lands. This bill also authorizes the collection of Claim Location and Maintenance Fees by the BLM, both of which have not been previously authorized.

For more information, contact the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources at (202) 225-9297.