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**Committee on Natural Resources**  
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**Opening Statement of**  
**The Honorable Doug Lamborn**  
**Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources**  
**At the Oversight Hearing on**

***“Abandoned Mined Lands: Innovative Solutions for Restoring the Environment,  
Improving Safety and Creating Jobs”***  
**July 14, 2011**

Good afternoon because of the series of votes and the subsequent delay in convening the hearing we are going to do things a little differently than normal.

We will have two panels; Mr Heck will testify first and then we will seat everyone else for one big panel so that everyone that has traveled here from outside the beltway has an opportunity to fully participate in the hearing.

Traditionally we would have a separate government only panel, however due to the delay imposed by votes we will empanel everyone together. Hopefully it will help to engender a positive flow of ideas amongst our witnesses and the Members.

Now for the meat of my statement -- we are here today to discuss the Nation's abandoned mined lands and look at innovative solutions to help restore the environment, improve safety and examine opportunities for job creation in the process.

During the subcommittee's hearing to examine the President's budget proposal for the Energy and Minerals Programs at the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service, Ms. Skaer had recommended a Good Samaritan approach to help address problems associated with abandoned hardrock mines in the west; an approach that has been successfully employed by the State of Pennsylvania to augment the abandoned mined land program that is part of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act – SMCRA - that governs coal mining in the United States.

Mr. Holt, my colleague and the Ranking Member of this committee, was intrigued by the prospect and interested in trying to understand why private industry – the mining industry in particular – would be willing to voluntarily help address a problem that was in part created by their predecessors prospecting and mining without the benefit of the current framework of environmental laws and regulations or the modern mining techniques and concurrent reclamation and mine closure practices that are part and parcel of modern mining activity for both coal and hardrock operations.

I say that the industry and their predecessors are only in part responsible because the Federal government shares responsibility for some abandoned mined lands and environmental issues associated with others. In particular during World War II – the government closed down all but one gold mine and directed how the other mines would operate as part of the war effort.

Compliance with the Defense Stockpile Act also contributed to the problem of abandoned mined land sites as we will hear from Congressman Heck shortly.

Mr. Heck recently introduced the “*Three Kids Mine Remediation and Reclamation Act*,” an abandoned mine site that was used to stockpile manganese as recently as 2003.

In this case the City of Henderson’s redevelopment council along with the State of Nevada is interested in acquiring the property from the Bureau of Land Management, cleaning up the site and redeveloping it. In the process they would assume all environmental liability from the federal government, take care of an environmental and physical hazard ultimately repurposing the area adding value to the community of Henderson. Rather than telling the whole story here I’ll let Mr. Heck provide the details.

During the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress, I introduced H.R. – 3203, the “*Cleanup of Inactive and Abandoned Mines Act*,” a Good Samaritan bill with provisions similar to what Ms. Skaer will discuss today in her testimony.

I also would like to welcome Director Pineda from my home state of Colorado. I look forward to the insight you can provide as the person in Colorado responsible for overseeing much of the state’s abandoned mined land cleanup efforts under SMCRA [SMAAC-RA]. We will also hear from the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service about their hardrock abandoned mine land programs that have been in place since about 1994.

Mr. Baker, representing the Safari Club International, is responsible for reintroducing Elk to Kentucky on reclaimed mined land; I look forward to hearing more about his story and the insights he may have for us looking for a solution for the problem at hand.

We also have GAO and EARTHWORKS testifying today. I believe this will be a productive hearing and look forward to what everyone has to offer. All of the witnesses and Members share the same goal – an abandoned mined land program that works, mine reclamation that improves the environment and reduction of hazards that keep people safe!