

Coal Community Reclamation and Revitalization Needs in the American Jobs Plan

Millions of Americans live less than a mile from an abandoned coal mine. These hazardous sites pose risks to our health and the environment and can undermine economic development. They contaminate groundwater, create dangerous mine openings, and discharge acid into waterways. In 1977, Congress passed the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) which established an Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Trust Fund, where active coal mine operators pay a small fee on every ton of coal mined in order to pay for abandoned mine reclamation.

Cleaning up and reclaiming abandoned mine lands restores polluted lands and water and eliminates hazards while putting thousands of people to work. But in order to ensure reclamation of these abandoned mine land sites and support economic development in coal-impacted regions across the country, the following provisions must be included in the American Jobs Plan or any alternative infrastructure proposal.

1. **AML Fund Reauthorization - HR 1734/S 1447 (Rep. Cartwright, Sen. Manchin)**

The AML Trust Fund is set to expire after September 2021, with at least \$21 billion in abandoned mine lands left to reclaim, and only \$2.2 billion left in the fund.¹

HR 1734 / S 1447 extends the per-ton fee on coal **at current rates** for 15 years, which will raise approximately \$1.6 billion for the fund over that time frame. The Interstate Mining Compact Commission and the National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Programs **have reached a consensus signed off on by all of these states and tribal territories** that is reflected in these bills.

2. **The RECLAIM Act - HR 1733/ S 1455 (Rep Cartwright, Sen. Manchin)**

The RECLAIM Act is a bipartisan effort to commit \$1 billion from the AML Fund to allow communities to turn the abandoned sites that are currently economic liabilities that hold back progress into job-creating economic assets in agriculture, tourism, clean energy, and beyond. This fund is essential to allow communities to dream big and plan for the bright future they want to build.

¹ Sources:

<https://ohiorivervalleyinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/AML-Report-Dixon-ORVI-V1.1-4.pdf>

<https://www.osmre.gov/programs/AML.shtm>



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3. \$10 billion for AML Reclamation - (Biden's American Jobs Plan, Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee Proposal, and Senator Booker/Rep. McEachin legislation)

Even with the proposed 15-year extension of the AML Fund, the AML fee will only pay for less than 20% of AML left to be reclaimed. President Biden's **American Jobs Plan** calls for an additional funding boost for the AML Fund in order to allow communities to respond to the scale of the AML crisis. This issue is urgent for several reasons: first, our communities are reeling from the combined blows of mine closures and the pandemic, and the jobs from reclamation have never been more needed.

Enacting President Biden's plan for additional general treasury funds to be put toward the AML Fund will help ensure these hazardous sites don't go unresolved. A recent Senate Energy & Natural Resources draft legislative proposal includes \$11.2 billion for abandoned mine cleanup, consistent with Biden's plan.

There is no silver bullet legislative solution on the table, but each of these steps forward is critically important to restore our coal-impacted lands and waters and put people in coal country back to work. The funding represented by each of these policies would be transformative for our communities and economies, creating thousands of jobs, remediating dangerous sites, and turning abandoned mine lands into economic hubs.



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