

## Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation



Robert "Bobby" E. Hughes  
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7-31-25

Dear Chairman Vitali,

The Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation (EPCAMR) has been working on reclaiming abandoned mine lands and restoring watersheds polluted by legacy abandoned mine drainage (AMD) water pollution across Northeastern and Northcentral PA for nearly 30 years. ARIPPA has been an initial stakeholder and charter member organization with our regional environmental non-profit since our inception. We have partnered together on reclamation, AMD cleanup, the cleanup of Centralia, PA, watershed tours, coordinating conferences and technical symposia, sponsoring conferences, and reclaiming waste culm piles for recreational facilities for nearly three decades. We have worked together to develop and administer a [mini-grant program](#) that has supported community projects throughout the coalfields of the Commonwealth of PA, where over \$102,000 has been donated to the program in the last 15 years, distributed by EPCAMR and the Western PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation (WPCAMR) to community watershed associations, Conservation Districts, and on-profits working on abandoned mine land reclamation, AMD remediation, and or monitoring and educational programs to conduct outreach within their coalfield communities.

EPCAMR would like to provide our full support for the continued subsidization of the remediation of abandoned waste coal piles across the Commonwealth of PA as the House Environmental & Natural Resource Protection Committee plans its hearing in August 2025.

We are confident that ARIPPA will provide the members with the background information on waste coal, the origination of the peak construction of a large number of the original Co-Generation Plants that had Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) that lasted for decades when they were first organized and scattered strategically across the Commonwealth where the largest volume of waste coal and silt basins with medium to high value British Thermal Units (BTUs) could be burned and mixed with high calcium carbonate limestone in their combustible fluidized bed (CFB) boiler technology.

Waste coal piles are still hazards in the landscape. They can easily catch fire. They can and still are in some rural areas dumping grounds for illegal tires and trash that must be cleaned up by community organizations and efforts with our Coalition. Youth and adults alike continue to trespass often with their ATVs and Off-Road Vehicles, potentially risking their personal health and safety. Rainfall events and storm events that can produce intensified rainfall accumulation in a short period can infiltrate the coal banks and basins leading to sedimentation, erosion, and the formation of acid abandoned drainage (AMD) formation in these areas. Removal of the coal banks reduces the acreage susceptible to the formation of AMD and increases sedimentation and erosion in these areas.

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The lack of trees on piles also contributes to higher temperatures near the coal banks due to the exposure to the sun and lack of shade. As sites are reclaimed, a number of them have also become areas for economic development. These Co-Gen plants that remain have done a great job of remaining resilient through some tough financial times, a pandemic, and competing with other energy markets. The Co-Gens should not be lumped with coal-fired plants that do not operate the same, nor do they use high calcium carbonate limestone in their processing of the waste coal. In western PA, many of the remaining piles have a lower BTU value, and since they are lower-sulfur coals, leaving the piles where they are will only continue to create areas where mine water pollution and underutilization of the removal potential of the abandoned mine coal piles are detrimental to the surrounding communities. We support ARIPPA's work to utilize the Coal Refuse Energy and Reclamation Tax Credit and the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards (AEPS) program.

EPCAMR has read ARIPPA's Reports on the environmental and economic benefits of the ARIPPA plants highlighted in the findings of their latest Econsult Solutions report, expected to be finalized within the next week. ARIPPA's work is a partnership between their industry, government agencies, and environmental organizations, including EPCAMR, WPCAMR, and other watershed groups.

ARIPPA plays a very important role in helping EPCAMR and many of our state-wide Coalition partners to reclaim abandoned mine lands and restore waterways polluted by AMD. ARIPPA is a strong advocate of the important role the waste-to-alternative-energy industry plays in the coal refuse and waste coal reclamation process.

At the 34th Annual Professional Recyclers of Pennsylvania (PROP) Recycling & Organics Conference, July 24 - 26, 2024, EPCAMR made a presentation on the status of our Swoyersville/Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization (AMLER) Reclamation and Community Athletic Area Project in Luzerne County that has involved ARIPPA and two, member Co-Gen Plants within the trade association. I've included several slides from that Conference to highlight the partnerships and success that we've had in just one of many project partnerships with ARIPPA. See the slides below for details. The ~7.5 acres of reclaimed land has been transferred to the Swoyersville Borough and the grass is growing very well this season. EPCAMR has continued to help the Borough and the Swoyersville Parks and Recreation Committee research and identify future funding sources for further development of the Community Athletic Area for the community.



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## The Swoyersville AMLER Reclamation and Community Athletic Area Project

### Partners

- EPCAMR
- Keystone Reclamation Fuels Management, LLC (a subsidiary of Olympus Power)
- Olympus Power, LLC (owner of Panther Creek Power & Northampton Generation Facilities)
- Pagnotti Enterprises
- Swoyersville Borough, Swoyersville Parks & Rec Commission
- PA DEP BAMR and PA DEP Pottsville District Mining Office (GFCC)
- OSMRE
- ARIPPA
- Foundation for PA Watersheds
- Legislative and Congressional Support

### Summary of Project Area of Swoyersville AML Problem Areas

- Harry E. Colliery Shut down in the 1970s
- 55-acre abandoned mine land separates the Swoyersville Community with refuse culm waste and culm silt basins
- Est. 4M tons of waste culm material/refuse; \$12M Total; \$4M EPCAMR contract
- 2.8 M tons is anticipated to be reusable as a fuel feedstock for the Co-Gen Plants to convert from waste to electrical energy generation to the grid
- Looking to take out 500K tons from 24.75 acres and reclaim the land with 7.5 acres being donated by Pagnotti Enterprises to Swoyersville Boro in Oct. 2024 for their development of Community Athletic Area Facilities
- EPCAMR assisting Swoyersville Boro Parks & Rec. Commission on identifying grants for further development of the greenspace to suit the community needs

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### Summary of Project Area of Abandoned Mine Lands

- \$8M is coming from the private sector through Olympus Power
- \$4M is from the AML Pilot Program (2017), now AMLER, & Title IV AML Funds
- Funds were awarded to be used for AML reclamation in conjunction with economic revitalization, community development, and reuse goals
- Future reclamation in additional phases, should they be funded, would lead to the reclamation of the entire 55-acre site for potentially residential, industrial, commercial, or recreational development depending on the landowner's long-term development plan for the remaining portion of the AML site
- Project will improve the overall water quality and reduce sediment loads to the Abraham Creek Watershed; EPCAMR completed a [Coldwater Heritage Conservation Plan](#) (2017-2018) that recommended this project to be funded





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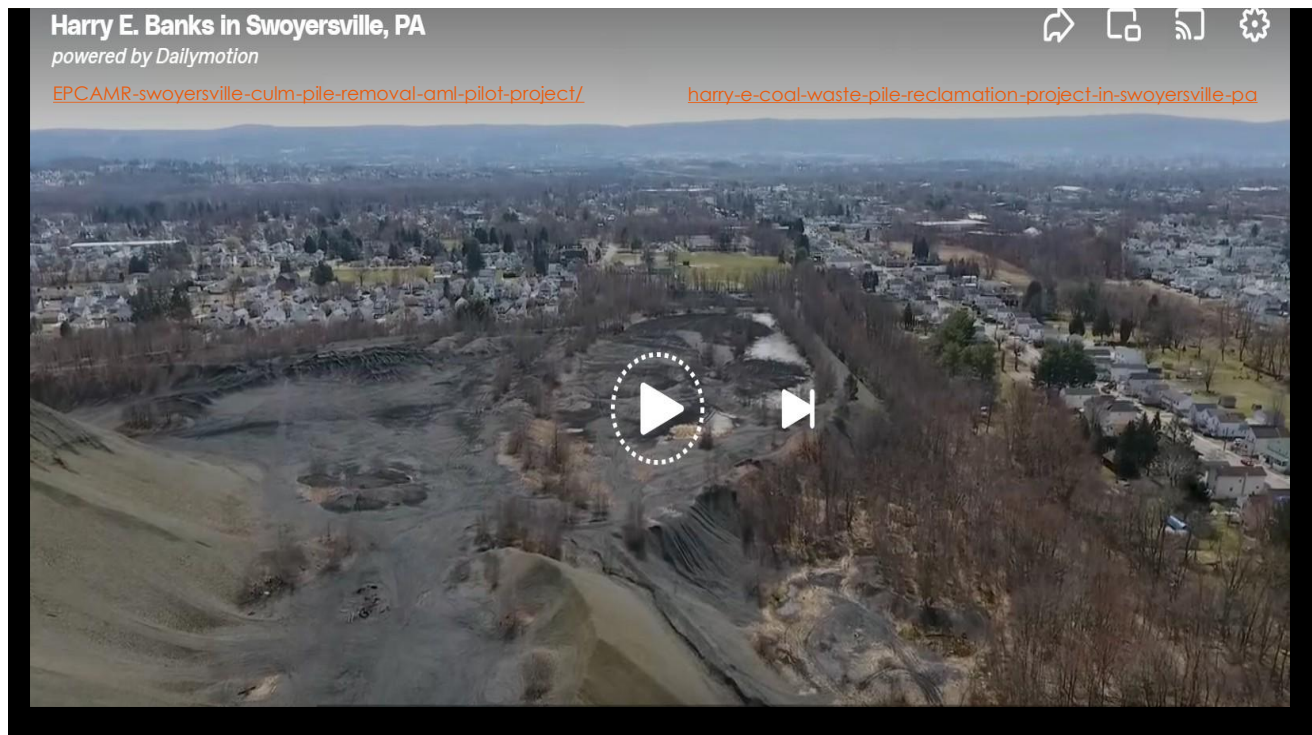
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**498,374.58 Tons removed through May 2024**







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On behalf of the EPCAMR Board of Directors, please enter our letter of support for ARIPPA into the House Environmental & Natural Resource Protection Committee's record when the hearing is confirmed.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Hughes  
Executive Director  
EPCAMR



August 8, 2025

The Honorable Representative Greg Vitali  
House Environmental & Natural Resource Protection Committee

RE: Letter of Support  
PA Coal Refuse to Energy Industry

Dear Representative Vitali,

Schuylkill Headwaters Association (SHA) is a volunteer watershed organization whose mission is to restore the environmental integrity of the Schuylkill River watershed and its tributaries within Schuylkill County. Due to Pennsylvania's extensive history of coal mining, thousands of coal refuse or coal "waste" piles have been left abandoned and scattered throughout the Commonwealth's coalfields, many of which are located in Schuylkill County. These sites pollute streams, negatively impact flora and fauna, create health and safety hazards, reduce nearby property values and mar the landscape.

The coal refuse to energy industry provides multiple benefits to Pennsylvania by addressing multi-media environmental issues including surface water pollution, ground water pollution, air pollution and land quality degradation. It also provides family sustaining jobs and other economic benefits to the communities in which these facilities are located, the counties from which the coal refuse is removed, and the areas where mining impacted sites are remediated and reclaimed. Notably, the industry's remediation and reclamation activities also provide significant downstream environmental benefits.

Removing these piles, the environmentally preferred method of remediation, is costly and time consuming. Further, given the limited public resources available to ameliorate these problems, it is likely that without the coal refuse energy plants these unsafe and polluting sites will continue to scar the landscape for decades to come.

To date, the coal refuse to energy industry in Pennsylvania has removed over 256 million tons of coal refuse from the environment, reclaimed at least 7,200 acres of abandoned mine lands to productive uses and, in the process, eliminated a major source of acid mine drainage polluting over 1,200 miles of our waterways. For most of the past thirty years this work has been performed at no cost to taxpayers or to the government by the coal refuse to energy facilities.

The removal, remediation and restoration work performed by the coal refuse to energy facilities is the only process that addresses and eliminates the environmental, safety and health issues associated with coal refuse and mining impacted lands. Consequently, the efforts of the coal refuse to energy industry ultimately reduce costs to local communities and to the Commonwealth because the issues associated with these mining impacted lands, including coal refuse piles, are addressed in a fashion that eliminates future problems.

Importantly, the coal refuse to energy industry contributes \$615 million per year to the Pennsylvania economy and directly supports nearly 1,500 family sustaining jobs in struggling coal communities that have lost population and struggled to create economic opportunities.

Schuylkill Headwaters Association supports the coal refuse reclamation to energy industry and the role they play in helping to restore and reclaim abandoned mine lands throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William Reichert', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

William Reichert  
President

Cc: Evan Franzese-Peterson (EFranzese@pahouse.net)  
Cristy Sweeney, ARIPPA (csweeney@arippa.org)



## SHAMOKIN CREEK RESTORATION ALLIANCE

PO BOX 263  
MOUNT CARMEL, PA 17851

August 4, 2025

The Honorable Greg Vitali  
30 East Wing  
P.O. Box 202166  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2166

Dear Chairman Vitali,

The Shamokin Creek Restoration Alliance is a citizen lead not for profit watershed group focused on having healthy streams and creeks throughout the Shamokin Creek watershed which will support aquatic life and promote wildlife habitat restoration and preservation. Our mission is to partner with local government, businesses, and citizens in clean-up efforts, provide educational opportunities for residents living within the watershed to learn about Abandoned Mine Land issues, and restore Abandoned Mine Lands to a condition supportive of commercial and residential development and recreational uses.

As the House Environmental & Natural Resource Protection Committee prepares to conduct a hearing on the continued subsidization of the remediation of abandoned coal refuse piles across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, The Shamokin Creek Restoration Alliance would like to provide its full support for the state programs that provide funding for mine land reclamation performed by the coal refuse reclamation to energy industry.

Pennsylvania is home to a third of the nation's abandoned mine lands (AML), and with that comes numerous environmental, public health, and safety issues. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has identified 764 coal refuse piles scattered throughout the state, covering over 8,000 acres and consisting of 211 million tons of polluting coal refuse. Of those, 44 piles are actively burning releasing uncontrolled air emissions.

These abandoned mines and coal refuse piles also create acidic mine water runoff that negatively impacts water quality. According to the DEP, the state has over 5,500 miles of streams degraded by abandoned mine drainage (AMD). Many of those miles are so polluted by AMD that they cannot support aquatic life and are considered dead. Unfortunately, there is no responsible party for addressing this problem.

The coal refuse reclamation to energy industry plays a vital role in helping to reclaim and restore AML throughout the Commonwealth. This industry is essential in removing coal refuse piles, remediating and reclaiming mining-affected land, and reducing or even eliminating surface and groundwater pollution. By converting coal refuse into alternative energy, the industry is eliminating AMD, which is one of the principal sources of contamination to surface water and groundwater, as well as reducing the



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## SHAMOKIN CREEK RESTORATION ALLIANCE

PO BOX 263  
MOUNT CARMEL, PA 17851

uncontrolled emissions of hazardous air pollutants and greenhouse gases from coal refuse piles. The work performed by this industry improves land, water, and air quality affecting residents across Pennsylvania.

Since its inception, the coal refuse reclamation to energy industry in Pennsylvania has removed and consumed as fuel more than 257 million tons of coal refuse, improved more than 1,200 miles of impaired streams, and reclaimed more than 8,000 acres of mining-affected lands. Furthermore, the industry contributes \$697 million per year to the Pennsylvania economy, supports at least 2,200 jobs, and provides \$62 million in annual environmental and public benefits on top of the up to \$255 million in annual avoided costs to the Commonwealth from the remediation performed by the industry.

The Shamokin Creek Restoration Alliance fully supports the reclamation activities undertaken by the coal refuse reclamation to energy facilities. The work they perform is essentially a partnership between the industry, government agencies, environmental organizations, and other local watershed groups like ours. The industry provides a unique environmental benefit by converting polluting coal refuse into alternative energy. In addition to the environmental benefits, the industry provides critical funding for AML reclamation at a reduced cost to taxpayers. Without these facilities, millions of tons of coal refuse would likely remain unreclaimed and continue polluting the air, land, and water indefinitely.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter of support for state programs that provide funding to support the mine land reclamation performed by the coal refuse reclamation to energy industry into the Committee's record for the hearing scheduled for August 11, 2025. Please feel free to reach out to us at the contact information below if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Stephen Motyka

President

Shamokin Creek Restoration Alliance



[shamokincreek@gmail.com](mailto:shamokincreek@gmail.com)



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## SHAMOKIN CREEK RESTORATION ALLIANCE

PO BOX 263  
MOUNT CARMEL, PA 17851

CC:

The Honorable Thomas Carper, Chair, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee  
The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito, Ranking Member, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee  
The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers, Chair, House Energy and Commerce Committee  
The Honorable Frank Pallone, Ranking Member, House Energy and Commerce Committee  
The Honorable Bruce Westerman, Chair, House Natural Resources Committee  
The Honorable Raúl Grijalva, Ranking Member, House Natural Resources Committee  
The Honorable Sam Graves, Chair, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee  
The Honorable Rick Larsen, Ranking Member, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee



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**Submitted Testimony of Shawn Steffee  
Business Agent, Boilermakers Local 154  
President, South-Central Building and Construction Trades Council  
Pennsylvania House Environmental & Natural Resource Protection Committee  
Hearing on Coal Refuse Remediation, AEPS Tier II – August 11, 2025**

Thank you to Chairman Vitali and Chairman Rader, and members of the House Environmental & Natural Resource Protection Committee for allowing me to submit this testimony.

My name is Shawn Steffee, President of the South-Central Building and Construction Trades Council, representing thousands of skilled union workers. On behalf of our members - journeymen welders, electricians, laborers, and their families - I submit this testimony to express our concern at the Committee's apparent agenda to undermine Pennsylvania's critical coal refuse plants and otherwise undermine the tremendous success of Pennsylvania's Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards (AEPS) Tier II. I urge Committee members and all House members to support an amendment to House Bill 501, which preserves Tier II without changes from the current AEPS, ensuring the survival of family-sustaining union jobs, environmental reclamation, and reliable energy for our Commonwealth.

This hearing's narrative, shaped by the inclusion of witnesses like Tom Schuster of the Sierra Club, signals a troubling bias against Pennsylvania's working families. Mr. Schuster's record, as detailed in his Sierra Club bio, celebrates the premature retirement of 15 coal-fired power plants, a campaign that obliterated tens of thousands of union jobs, shattered communities, and contributed to our current electric grid crisis, where reliable baseload power is increasingly scarce. His opposition to facilities like Seward and, now closed Cambria Cogen dismissed their proven role in remediating acid mine drainage from abandoned coal refuse piles - an environmental success story that should align with the very principles his organization claims to champion. By prioritizing ideology over practical solutions, Mr. Schuster and like-minded panelists ignore the devastation their policies inflict on Pennsylvania's workers and the environment they purport to protect.

Unlike AEPS Tier I, Tier II incentivizes reliable energy sources, such as coal refuse plants and steel manufacturers repurposing coke oven and blast furnace gas, which sustain thousands of high-paying union jobs and bolster grid stability. As Rob Bair, President of the Pennsylvania Building and Construction Trades Council, has stated, "HB 501's revisions to Tier II PRESS energy sources risk reducing incentives for critical electricity providers, including coal refuse electric generation plants and steel manufacturers that repurpose coke oven gas for on-site electricity generation. These facilities are vital to Pennsylvania's

economy, supporting thousands of union jobs and contributing to grid reliability. Reducing their incentives could jeopardize their viability and the livelihoods of our members.” I stand firmly with President Bair and implore this Committee to reject any effort to dismantle Tier II.

Coal refuse plants, such as Seward, support thousands of union jobs. For instance, in 2024, the plant generated 200,000-man hours and is on track to duplicate this work in 2025 in light of a Fall outage planned for this Fall. These facilities provide family-sustaining wages and benefits, anchoring host communities. Beyond economic impact, they address a legacy of environmental harm by reclaiming over 1.2 million tons of coal refuse annually, reducing acid mine drainage that pollutes Pennsylvania’s streams and rivers. From 2018 to 2022, Tier II facilities enabled our steel industry to repurpose waste gases, avoiding fuel consumption equivalent to heating 1.1 million households per year. This dual benefit - environmental cleanup and reliable energy production - is unique to Tier II and directly contradicts the narrative that coal refuse plants are merely relics of the past.

In stark contrast to AEPS Tier II, Tier I diverts 70% of ratepayer-funded subsidies to out-of-state developers, siphoning resources away from Pennsylvania’s economy. Tier II, however, ensures that every dollar invested stays in our Commonwealth, supporting local jobs, local innovation, and local communities. Pennsylvania ratepayers receive far greater value from Tier II, which delivers baseload power critical for grid reliability during extreme weather events, such as the 2022 winter storms that strained our grid.

We urge the Pennsylvania House to preserve existing Tier II incentives for capturing waste coal and gases, transforming environmental liabilities into electricity, jobs, and cleaner waterways. This is not about resisting progress. It’s about leveraging proven technologies to bridge to a sustainable future without sacrificing our workforce. Weakening Tier II, as some witnesses in this hearing advocate, would destabilize our grid, eliminate thousands of union jobs, and betray the communities this Committee is entrusted to serve. It would also ignore the economic reality that coal refuse plants have removed over 200 million tons of coal refuse since the 1980s, restoring land and water quality while generating reliable power.

On behalf of Boilermakers Local 154 and the South-Central Building and Construction Trades Council, I urgently call on this Committee and the entire Pennsylvania House to support the amendment to HB 501, preserving AEPS Tier II without changes. Tier II is the only AEPS tier that guarantees reliable power and ensures ratepayer dollars benefit Pennsylvania workers, families, and communities. Let us reject the anti-worker, anti-community narrative peddled by those who prioritize ideology over practicality.

Pennsylvania's union workforce and energy security deserve better. Thank you for considering this testimony.



**Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation**

PO Box 295, Luxor, PA 15662 (717)497.3415

andy@wpcamr.org www.wpcamr.org www.AMRClearinghouse.org

August 5, 2025

The Honorable Greg Vitali  
Chairman, House Environmental and Natural Resource Protection Committee  
Pennsylvania House of Representatives  
30 East Wing  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

**RE: Support for the coal refuse reclamation-to-energy facilities**

Dear Representative Vitali:

My organization, the Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation (WPCAMR) is a non-profit, non-partisan, local, state, federal, and industry partnership dedicated to improving water quality and endorsing the reclamation of abandoned mine lands in the region.

Pennsylvania, by far, has more legacy problems from the unregulated days of coal mining than any other state. Significant among those problems are the thousands of waste coal piles throughout Pennsylvania's coal regions. These piles pose many hazards to health and safety of local communities and, more often than not, are prolific producers of acid mine drainage, often containing metals, which pollute neighboring streams and rivers.

The coal refuse reclamation-to-energy industry plays a major role in abandoned mine reclamation as a vital partner, providing environmental benefits by removing these waste coal piles and reclaiming abandoned mine lands in our region. In Pennsylvania alone, over the past 30 years, this industry has removed over 225 million tons of coal refuse from our land, reclaimed at least 7,200 acres of mine-scarred land, and restored over 1,200 miles of impaired streams. Their work must continue.

We commend your leadership on this topic by initiating a conversation about the importance of the coal refuse reclamation-to-energy industry. That industry is critical to address the health, safety and environmental costs imposed on local communities by our nation's coal mining legacy and continues a long-standing public-private partnership with coal refuse reclamation-to-energy facilities that remove polluting coal refuse piles and reclaim AML sites.

***“Take a stand for reclamation”***



**Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation**

WPCAMR supports the work of the coal refuse reclamation-to-energy facilities for the plain and simple fact that they are a valuable ally in abandoned mine reclamation and are an important part of the community, providing jobs and energy to the region.

Sincerely,

Andrew McAllister  
Regional Coordinator

*WPCAMR is a non-profit, non-partisan, local, state, federal, and industry partnership dedicated to improving water quality and endorsing the reclamation of abandoned mine lands in the region.*



The Honorable Greg Vitali, Chairman  
House Environmental & Natural Resource Protection Committee

Dear Representative Vitali:

The Blacklick Creek Watershed Association (BCWA) strongly supports the Pennsylvania waste coal to power model because of the significant environmental improvements the industry has achieved on the Blacklick Creek and other mine drainage degraded watersheds throughout the state. Blacklick Creek is a 420-square mile watershed heavily impacted by abandoned mine drainage. Located in Indiana and Cambria Counties, it provides approximately one-third of the flow to the Conemaugh River basin. BCWA is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1993 dedicated to the improvement and restoration of the Blacklick Creek watershed.

Over the past thirty-plus years the waste coal industry has successfully reclaimed hundreds of acres and millions of tons of highly polluting coal refuse in the Blacklick Creek watershed directly resulting in large and measurable water quality and aquatic improvements. The concentration of pollutants in leachate from the typical bituminous coal waste pile is often ten to one hundred times higher than that found in other sources of mine drainage, so the benefits of addressing pollution from waste coal piles are significant.

A notable example is the restoration of the South Branch Blacklick Creek which as recently as the late 1990's was an orange-flowing stream supporting very little aquatic life; the South Branch is now a trout fishery stocked regularly by two local fishing clubs and its improvement is almost solely due to the re-mining for fuel of four large abandoned coal refuse piles along with other smaller piles. Elk Creek in west-central Cambria County has also been significantly improved by the re-mining and reclamation of large refuse piles outside the town of Colver. Recently BCWA has noted improvements in lower Yellow Creek in central Indiana County due to re-mining of the large Lucerne refuse pile. The waste coal industry has removed many smaller piles throughout the Blacklick Creek watershed adding to the cumulative improvement in the watershed over the years.

Much of this work, easily valued in many millions of dollars, was done with private money meaning environmental agency and grant funds that may have been spent on these projects were freed to be applied elsewhere. These savings in taxpayer dollars should be weighed when considering the costs of the Coal Refuse Energy and Reclamation Tax Credit and the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards.

Over the years critics of reclaiming refuse piles through the waste coal to fuel model have suggested that there are better alternative ways to reclaim the piles and eliminate them as a pollution source. While BCWA has witnessed first-hand the measurable and proven water quality and aquatic life benefits of many projects addressing the piles through re-mining them for fuel, we have yet to see a single successful project in our area completed using these alternatives.

While much good work has been done over the past three decades through using waste coal to generate electricity, there remain many areas of polluting abandoned coal refuse in the Blacklick Creek watershed and elsewhere in the state that can be most effectively remediated by burning the waste for fuel.

Thank you for considering the BCWA comments concerning the importance of the waste coal to fuel model for reclaiming waste coal piles and greatly reducing their pollution loading into our watershed.

Sincerely,

BCWA





160 Big Bear Lane, Ashville, PA 16613  
Phone: (814) 329-3929

## OFFICERS

Daniel McMullen, President  
Ed McMullen, President Elect  
Dane Kalwanski, Treasurer  
Jerry McMullen, Secretary

August 8, 2025

Honorable Chairman Greg Vitali  
House Environmental and Natural Resource Protection Committee

Evan Franzese-Peterson  
Executive Director  
Chairman Vitali's Office  
EFranzese@pahouse.net

RE: Support Coal Refuse Reclamation to Energy

Dear Sir:

Clearfield Creek Watershed Association is an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the improvement of water quality in the Clearfield Creek from the headwaters in Cambria County Cresson/Loretto area to its mouth at Clearfield, PA in Clearfield County. In this area and throughout these counties, millions of tons of waste coal and acres of abandoned mine lands pollute miles of streams.

Although we have completed several abandoned mine lands and drainage abatement projects, we have been blessed to have four waste coal power plants in the region who were aligned with the same mission – (dedicated to the improvement of water quality and lands). These coal refuse to energy facilities have cleaned up several million tons in our area. There are now miles of streams that sustain aquatic life, fish and provide recreational activities for the community. In addition, these facilities provide direct and indirect sustainable jobs in our area which to some extent is economically depressed.

We are submitting this letter in support of those facilities and their industry organization ARIPPA. Any financial assistance to the waste to energy facilities in the form of tax credits, alternative energy credits, or similar monetary avenues greatly pays for itself. The payback is in the form of creating a sustainable environment and economic benefits to the taxpayers of Pennsylvania.

These facilities are the only ones who can use the coal refuse material for energy. If they go away, who will step up next to abate these streams and lands?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "D. McMullen".

Daniel McMullen  
President, CCWA



John W Wenzel PhD  
Executive Director  
Conemaugh Valley Conservancy  
Box 218, Johnstown PA 15907  
[Jwenzel@pacvc.org](mailto:Jwenzel@pacvc.org)  
[Conemaughvalleyconservancy.Org](http://Conemaughvalleyconservancy.Org)

The Honorable Greg Vitali, Chairman  
House Environmental and Natural Resource Protection Committee

August 8, 2025

Dear Representative Vitali,

The Pennsylvania waste-coal-to-power programs have been critical to rehabilitating some of the most damaging legacy mine dumps in western Pennsylvania. On behalf of the Conemaugh Valley Conservancy, and the dozen environmental groups we serve in our 1,887 square mile watershed, I urge you to support these program. As long as we are still burning coal, we should facilitate harvesting waste piles that contribute vast amounts of toxic runoff when left abandoned.

A 2017 study by DEP ("Refuse Piles using Fluidized Bed Combustion Ash in the Blacklick Creek Watershed, Pennsylvania" by Gregory Aaron, Rock Martin, and Gregory Greenfield) demonstrated that at five sites in our area 8.7 million tons of coal refuse was reprocessed as these major piles were removed and burned. Water chemistry in local streams was improved from pH of about 3 or 4 in the 1990s to 6 or 7 by 2017. These headwaters, formerly dead, now supply Blacklick Creek with ecologically healthy water, allowing Blacklick to support recreation by fishermen and paddlers.

It is hard to imagine a government program that would rehabilitate our landscape on the scale that the power companies do when they harvest old mine dumps. While some environmentalists lament that the power companies are burning coal, the broader perspective sees the tremendous benefit the public enjoys by removing the waste dumps and restoring the landscape to a more healthy condition. Waste-coal-to-power represents a win-win program where private industry performs a tremendous environmental service as they produce the electricity our society needs. Please join us in advocating for continuation of these important programs.

Sincerely,

John W. Wenzel  
Executive Director  
Conemaugh Valley Conservancy  
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