



**STREAM RESTORATION INCORPORATED**  
A PA Non-Profit Organization 501(c)(3)  
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Date: November 20, 2019

Re: H.R. 4735 Mine Affected Community Energy and Environment Act

To Whom It May Concern,

Stream Restoration Incorporated (SRI) would like to offer our support of Federal H.R. 4735 Mine Affected Community Energy and Environment Act which would provide tax credit to help support the coal refuse to energy industry. This niche industry provides a unique solution to a serious environmental issue. It is our opinion that this tax credit will help to complete environmental restoration projects and improve water quality while generating electricity, providing jobs and therefore economic benefit.

Stream Restoration Incorporated is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to restoring streams that are impacted by abandoned mine lands. Since our formation in 1996, we have worked with grassroots organizations from all over Pennsylvania who are actively reclaiming landscapes and building passive systems to treat acid mine drainage in order to restore their streams and watersheds. One of the common eyesores of the landscape and sources of pollution to our streams that can be seen across the Commonwealth are coal refuse disposal sites.

Because of our mission, people within our organization have personally visited more abandoned mine sites than most other people in the world. Coal refuse, whether as unreclaimed piles, vegetated reclaimed piles or buried within old reclaimed surface mines often generate the most severely polluted acid mine drainage that we see. Coal refuse sites such as Potato Garden Run in Allegheny County, McIntire in Butler County, and Neal Run in Indiana County have extremely polluted discharges with high metal concentrations. Average water quality of the acid mine discharge at Neal Run has acidity of 4,550 mg/L, iron 1,100 mg/L, and aluminum 280 mg/L. To put that in perspective, typical water quality limits placed on an active coal mine operation in Pennsylvania are at a minimum <7 mg/L of iron and <2 mg/L of aluminum, and in some cases are even more stringent. In addition to acid mine drainage, these piles are often located beside streams and are easily erodible. During storm events, the coal refuse washes into streams adding metal laden acidic sediment to the stream. Sediment accumulation along stream bottoms destroys the habit of macroinvertebrates (i.e. aquatic insects) that are critical to the stream's ecosystem and complex food web. Also, these piles can and do burn and smolder releasing untreated toxic pollutants into the atmosphere.

The PA DEP estimates that there are currently about 770 unreclaimed coal refuse sites covering 8,300 acres and containing an estimated 217 million tons of refuse in Pennsylvania alone. One of the most economical, effective, and environmentally-sound means of addressing the coal refuse problem is to burn the refuse in what are known as Circulating Fluidized Bed (CFB) boiler power plants. These power plants are specially designed to burn the coal refuse to produce electricity. The CFB plants utilize finely

crushed limestone in the process to help control air emissions which results in the creation of an alkaline ash that can then be used to help reclaim the coal refuse site. By burning the coal refuse in these plants, electricity is being generated, jobs are being created, environmental pollution is being eliminated, and landscapes are being reclaimed. By utilizing this process, a majority of the cost to complete the environmental restoration work is paid for by the generation and sale of electricity. If the coal refuse was to be reclaimed by other means, the PA DEP would typically have to utilize public funds to cap and revegetate the site, which is not always successful. As a matter of fact, the previously mentioned Neal Run site has been "reclaimed" and covered with vegetation even though it has one of the worst quality acid mine discharges in the entire state.

While use of CFB plants is the most cost-effective approach to addressing the coal refuse problem, costs associated with permitting, transporting the material to the plant, increasing regulatory requirements, maintenance, etc., coupled with an increasingly competitive market is threatening the survival of this niche industry. A few of the plants have already closed and there are rumors of more closing in the near future. If all of the plants were to close, the burden of the cleanup effort would fall entirely on taxpayers. According to one source, these plants are providing the PA DEP an estimated \$90 to \$270 million dollars per year in reclamation costs while supporting 3,000 jobs with \$194 million in annual wages and generating \$615 million in economic impact. Therefore, SRI believes that by providing the tax incentives, these plants will be able to stay in operation and coal refuse sites will continue to be reclaimed in the most economical and environmentally beneficial way. It is truly a win-win situation.

While there may be environmental organizations that oppose this legislation due to concerns of air quality emissions and the production of greenhouse gasses that are contributing to climate change, we know that Pennsylvania is far from producing 100% of its energy from renewable resources and therefore the environmental benefits of cleaning up the coal refuse piles while simultaneously providing electricity and creating jobs outweigh those negatives. Since burning of coal and natural gas are not going away anytime soon, why not burn the coal refuse, reclaim the land, and restore our damaged streams at the same time?

We hope that you will support this worthwhile legislation. If you have any questions, comments, concerns or would like additional clarification or information, please do not hesitate to contact our office. In addition, if you would be interested in visiting coal refuse disposal sites to see for yourself first-hand the environmental impact, we would be happy to provide you a tour.

Sincerely,



Timothy P. Danahy, QEP  
Secretary & Director, Stream Restoration Incorporated