

The Honorable Matt Cartwright
1034 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC
20515

The Honorable Glenn ‘GT’ Thompson
400 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC
20515

Dear Representative Cartwright and Representative Thompson:

The American Sportfishing Association (ASA) is writing today to thank you for being a champion of reclamation and helping communities recover from the negative externalities of coal mines. The introduction of H.R. H.R.4248 the *Abandoned Mine Land Reauthorization Act*, showcases your dedication to helping communities throughout the United States left with the legacy of coal mines and will benefit the watersheds, fisheries, and aquatic resources in the areas where reclamation will take place.

The Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Reclamation Program was established under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 and has been instrumental in rehabilitating land that was impacted by coal mining. This program has a proven track record of putting money on the ground to improve impacted ecosystems and communities with \$5.747 billion of all funds collected under the program provided as grants to State and Indian Tribes. So far, more than 875,000 acres of high priority abandoned coal mines sites have been reclaimed with \$616 million spent on water hazards including polluted drinking water and acid mine drainage. Despite these impressive accomplishments, \$10.6 billion of high priority problems still threaten communities and watersheds as they are left unclaimed.

Advocating on behalf of the recreational fishing industry, ASA supports the responsible management of our nation’s natural resources to ensure our country’s recreational fisheries are conserved for the enjoyment of the public. Specifically, in our Position Statement on Mining we highlight our opposition to “select mines where a clear and substantial risk is posed to highly important recreational fisheries. . . [as] ASA believes that some areas have special cultural and economic importance and, therefore, warrant special consideration when something as potentially harmful as large-scale mining operation has been proposed.” Notably, ASA has engaged in advocacy efforts to prevent mining operations in Bristol Bay, Yellowstone National Park, and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. AML Reauthorization complements this Position Statement as it is focused on improving areas left with the scars of coal mining and bringing in recreational opportunities.

Recreational fishing is one of our nation’s favorite pastimes with more than 49 million anglers enjoying the sport each year and generating \$125 billion in economic output. Reclamation projects are an avenue to increase the recreational value of an area, helping communities recover from the legacy of coal mining.

Currently, recreational fishing is already an economic driver in Appalachia. Kentucky, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Alabama, Ohio and Virginia not only boast the highest amount of unfunded coal-related problems in the nation but have a significant sportfishing economy. These states are home to more than 7 million anglers who spent a total of \$4.1 billion while supporting 44,000 jobs. These numbers are only poised to grow as reclamation activates take place, rehabilitate watersheds, improve the overall health of fisheries, and create more opportunities for recreational angling.

Again, the American Sportfishing Association would like to thank you for being a champion of this issue and prioritizing policies that balance reclamation with the development of recreational opportunities. While it is important to take actions to stop projects before they pose an unnecessary threat to our environment and fisheries,

it is equally important to advocate for programs that will assist with the reclamation of projects that have already impacted fisheries resources.

Sincerely,

Chad Tokowicz
Inland Fisheries Policy Manager
American Sportfishing Association