

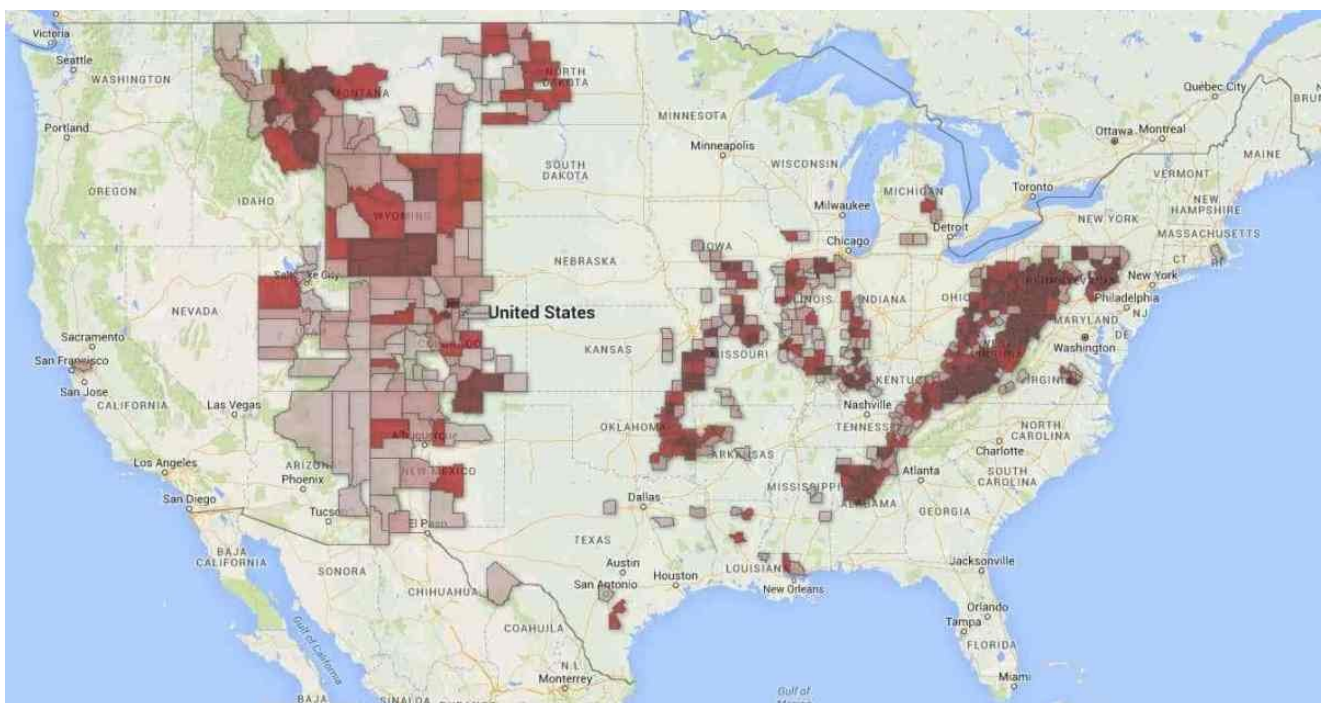
# Abandoned Mine Land Fund Reauthorization (H.R. 1734)

*Congress can create jobs, clean up abandoned coal mines and invest in the future of coal communities by supporting this important fund before it expires in 2021.*

Millions of Americans live less than a mile from an unreclaimed coal site; these sites pose a continuing threat to the health, economy, and living environments for citizens of these communities. This bill is an exciting bipartisan opportunity for communities that have historically depended on the coal industry to rebuild themselves. H.R. 1734 should be considered an essential addition to any infrastructure or economic recovery package.

In 1977, Congress established the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) fund under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act. This established a per ton coal fee to help finance the reclamation and remediation of lands mined prior to 1977. In the 40 year history of the program, amazing strides have been made. The AML program has eliminated over 46,000 open mine portals, reclaimed over 1,000 miles of dangerous highwalls, restored water supplies to countless residents, created jobs and economic development opportunities, and protected 7.2 million people nationwide from AML hazards.

Funding for this essential program is set to expire this year, yet according to the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, it will cost at least \$11.46 billion to reclaim the remaining high priority abandoned mines across the country.



Abandoned mine lands impact communities across the United States. Darker red counties have increased burden. Source: <https://dailyonder.com/abandoned-mine-land-reclamation-who-needs-it-most/2016/02/07/>

# Key Provisions to Ensure the Future of the Abandoned Mine Land Fund

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## Fee Collection Must Remain at Current Levels

Since 1977, under the requirements of Title IV, coal mine operators have paid a per-ton fee to the Office of Surfacing Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) to fund the AML Reclamation Program. In 40 years, this fee has never been adjusted for inflation, in fact, it has been lowered twice. [Reports have shown](#) that the fee at its current rate is likely insufficient to reclaim remaining mining legacies by 2050. Further reduction of the fee, combined with predicted declines in coal production, would drastically undercut the future of the fund. If the fund is reauthorized for another 15 years, it will generate about \$1.7 billion over the next 15 years based on current Energy Information Administration coal production projections.<sup>1</sup>

Any further reduction in AML funding would not only decrease economic development in impacted areas, but endanger the health and safety of the millions of Americans living near an AML site.

## The AML Fund Must Be Reauthorized for 15 Years

Reclamation work is a long term process - projects take years from permitting to completion. Some dangers, such as acid mine drainage, require long term treatment. Stakeholders working on these issues depend on long term fund stability to plan projects that have major impacts on the future of their communities. The traditional renewal period of 15 years was created to provide stability for long term planning for industry, agencies, lawmakers and stakeholders.

Beyond the inventoried cost of known AML dangers, AML emergencies that stem from sites and AML problems that have not yet been identified nor assessed also loom. These problems can't be predicted and can pose extreme threat - from mine subsidence that can threaten homes and roads, to mine water blow outs, mine fires, or AML-related landslides. Communities near abandoned mines live in constant worry of this type of sudden, devastating event.

If funded and extended at these levels, the AML Fund could create more than 13,000 jobs<sup>2</sup> while addressing the remaining problems at thousands of AML sites and providing a needed economic boost to the regions that have contributed so much to the country.

**A well funded, long term AML Program helps give communities the security and peace of mind they deserve.**

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<sup>1</sup> [http://appvoices.org/images/uploads/2019/06/AML\\_report\\_AppalachianVoices\\_June2019.pdf](http://appvoices.org/images/uploads/2019/06/AML_report_AppalachianVoices_June2019.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/economic-renewal.pdf>