



September 18, 2024

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chairman
Committee on Transportation
& Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation
& Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larson,

We write today in strong support of the bipartisan Good Samaritan Remediation of Abandoned Hardrock Mines Act of 2024 (H.R. 7779), as amended, and appreciate the committee's efforts to successfully complete the decades-long effort to establish a Good Samaritan permitting program. This legislation is a historic step forward to provide a pathway for the cleanup and remediation of legacy abandoned mine lands (AML) and provide meaningful environmental and public health improvements to impacted communities. We thank Representatives Celeste Maloy (R-Utah) and Mary Peltola (D-Alaska), their staff, and committee staff for working so diligently to advance this important bill.

Historic mining in the United States, which predates modern environmental laws and current reclamation standards, left behind thousands of abandoned hardrock mine sites and features, a portion of which pose environmental and safety risks to surrounding communities and negatively impact water quality. With many of these legacy sites more than a century old, there are no financially viable owners, operators or responsible persons to remediate these sites.

To address these legacy AMLs, conservation organizations, mining companies and other stakeholders with no legal or financial responsibility or connection to these sites, have partnered to clean up and remediate sites through voluntary Good Samaritan efforts. While this work has resulted in important environmental benefits to communities, volunteers need adequate liability protections to scale up these efforts and invest resources and expertise to complete critical remediation projects.

Unfortunately, our current legal framework under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act and the Clean Water Act serves as a deterrent to Good Samaritans because of the legal responsibility associated with the pre-existing pollution from the mine.

This carefully crafted bipartisan legislation supports a path forward by establishing a pilot permitting program for 15 low-risk projects that holds volunteers accountable while providing needed liability protections to eligible Good Samaritans who remediate AML sites in accordance with an approved permit. Any activities not authorized by the permit remain subject to all applicable laws. Additionally, a Good Samaritan permit holder who violates a permit and worsens environmental conditions could be subject to enforcement and liability if not corrected.

From its inception, this legislation is the product of strong bipartisan leadership and is the result of broad, thorough and thoughtful consensus between the mining industry and conservation organizations like Trout Unlimited and many others that are proactively engaged in finding solutions to the legacy problems associated with AMLs rather than seeking to maintain the status quo. Further, this legislation mirrors the Senate companion legislation that recently passed by unanimous consent and is supported by more than 40 equally bipartisan cosponsors.

Today's mining industry stands ready to address legacy mine sites that were abandoned long ago. This bipartisan legislation would finally allow the mining industry to play a more constructive and larger role in AML remediation by utilizing our equipment, skills and experience to clean up these sites without incurring legal liability for others past actions.

This bill is critical to removing the obstacles that are preventing the remediation of important land and water resources, and it deserves this committee's full support to clear the way for positive, on-the-ground environmental progress.

Sincerely,

Alaska Miners Association
American Exploration and Mining Association
Arizona Mining Association
Colorado Mining Association
Idaho Mining Association
Mining Minnesota
Montana Mining Association
National Mining Association
Nevada Mining Association
New Mexico Mining Association
Utah Mining Association
Women's Mining Coalition
Wyoming Mining Association