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## House approves bill to help clean up abandoned mines

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With supermajority approval, the House Chamber passed the Bureau of Land Management Foundation Act (H.R. 3844) to address the issue of acid mine drainage from an estimated 500,000 abandoned mine operations in the U.S.

Introduced by Rep. Jody Hice (R-GA) in October 2015, the bill establishes a nonprofit Bureau of Land Management Foundation to help fund the clean-up of abandoned mine lands and orphaned oil and gas sites to “further the conservation of natural, scenic, historic, scientific, educational, wildlife habitat, or recreational resources.”

Inspired by the need for more private sector resources after the Gold King Mine spill, the bill would allow the Foundation to obtain and administer private donations for clean-up efforts, as well as educational and technical resources.

The Secretary of the Interior would appoint the Foundation’s governing Board of Directors , which would consist of nine members with experience in energy or mineral production, land reclamation, or energy and mineral resource financing, law or research.

Although the Foundation would not be associated with an agency or government establishment, it would report to the House Natural Resources and the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committees annually on its activities.

H.R.3844 is part of a three-part bill package that also includes the Mining Schools Enhancement Act (H.R.3734) and the Locatable Minerals Claim Location and Maintenance Fees Act (H.R.3843), which have yet to pass through the House.

The bill is now being considered by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Further action will take place after the Congressional summer recess ends on September 5.

Sources: Bureau of Land Management, Congress.gov, E&E Daily, Environmental Protection Agency, House.gov, The Durango Herald

*Updated 8/1/16*

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