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The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held a legislative hearing on a discussion draft of the Community Reclamation Partnerships Act (H.R.____) to be introduced by Representative Darin LaHood (R-IL-18). This legislation would streamline efforts to clean up abandoned coal mines throughout the U.S.

The Community Reclamation Partnerships Act would amend the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA)– which gives states the primary responsibility for developing and implementing regulations for surface mining operations – to authorize partnerships between states and non-governmental organizations for reclaiming and restoring land and water resources that were adversely affected by coal mining activities before August 3, 1977. Currently, states apply for federal grants in order to perform reclamation and cleanup of abandoned mine lands (AMLs), but the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement estimates that more than \$10 billion of work remains to be done. The bill would encourage Good Samaritan groups, or “community reclaimers,” to aid in the cleanup without indefinitely inheriting legal responsibility for the AMLs.

The discussion draft of the bill received generally positive feedback from members of the Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources. As of May 25, the Community Reclamation Partnerships Act has not yet been introduced in the House of Representatives.

Sources: E&E News, Department of the Interior Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, U.S. House of Representatives
