

# Brownfields Mine-Scarred Lands Initiative

## *Federal Agencies Collaborate with Communities*

On January 11, 2002, President Bush signed into law the Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act (Public Law 107-118; H.R. 2869). The Brownfields Law expanded the definition of brownfields to include mine-scarred lands, making these properties eligible for the benefits of the Brownfields Program.

### **Mine-Scarred Lands Working Group**

As an extension of the Brownfields Federal Partnership, the Mine-Scarred Lands (MSL) Working Group is co-chaired by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Brownfields Cleanup and Redevelopment and the U.S. Department of Interior's Office of Surface Mining. A total of six federal agencies makeup the MSL Working Group.

The MSL Working Group was established to collaboratively address the challenges of mine-scarred lands cleanup and revitalization. The mission of the Working Group is to foster the cleanup and sustainable revitalization of mine-scarred lands and affected communities.

### **Mine-Scarred Lands Federal Partners**

- **Appalachian Regional Commission**
- **U.S. Department of Interior**
  - Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance
  - Bureau of Land Management
  - Office of Surface Mining
- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**
- **U.S. Department of Agriculture**
- **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**
- **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

## What Are Mine-Scarred Lands?

Mine-scarred lands are defined as lands, associated waters, and surrounding watersheds where extraction, beneficiation, or processing of ores and minerals (including coal) has occurred. It is estimated that there are more than 500,000 abandoned mining sites composed of hard rock and coal mines across the U.S. Many of these MSL properties are located on both public and private land and involve complex economic, social, and environmental issues.



## Mine-Scarred Lands Pose Several Challenges

Mine-scarred lands have become a persistent problem in many communities due to the economic and environmental challenges of cleaning up and reusing mine-scarred lands.

**Economic Distress** impacts many former mining communities as they transition from an extraction industry to new enterprises. There is often limited infrastructure or land suitable for development. In addition, the blighting influence of mine-scarred lands may deter new investment.

**Acid Mine Drainage (AMD)** occurs when water comes in contact with mining wastes during and after operations. The resulting acidic water seeps through and flows out of abandoned mines long after they are closed. Most AMD discharges directly into streams killing vegetation, degrading aquatic ecosystems, threatening fish and wildlife, and posing a threat to public water supplies.

**Stockpiled waste rock and tailings** pose a serious threat to the health of ecosystems. Wastes from mining operations are left behind in large gobb piles or waste dumps, and often contribute to metal loading in streams and rivers.

**Stored chemicals and leaking containers** left behind when mines close often pose dangers at these sites. Chemical containers can be damaged or corroded, exposing dangerous contents.

**Open shafts, rotting support structures, equipment and open pits** found at abandoned mine sites pose a health and safety threat to local residents.





## The MSL Demonstration Project Program

The MSL Working Group has identified six Demonstration Projects across the U.S. where the opportunity exists to collaborate with local stakeholders by providing technical assistance to clean up and reuse mine-scarred lands. Activities may include identifying community redevelopment needs and facilitating local visioning and action plans. These plans will guide redevelopment efforts and incorporate local partners in the planning process.

### ***Barrick Bullfrog Mine*** - Nye County, Nevada

The Barrick Bullfrog mine, a former gold mine, is in the final stages of closure and the nearby community of Beatty is determining reuse opportunities.

### ***CAN DO Innovations Site*** - Hazleton, Pennsylvania

Hazleton is working to clean up an 82-acre anthracite coal mine site, which is part of the larger Cranberry Creek Gateway corridor project that involves 366-acres of contiguous mine-scarred lands.

### ***Eureka Town Site*** - San Juan County, Colorado

An approximate one-mile segment of the Upper Animas River valley was contaminated by the historical disposal of tailings into waterways from abandoned gold, silver, lead and zinc mines.

### ***Kelly's Creek*** - Kanawha County, West Virginia

This seven-community watershed is deprived of healthy drinking water, due to historic coal mining and insufficient sewage disposal. Initial cleanup planning has begun with strong local and regional support.

### ***Pennsylvania Mine*** - Summit County, Colorado

Pennsylvania Mine has impacted water quality in the area by loading metals into Peru Creek, a tributary of the Snake River. The community has completed scientific studies on water cleanup, but requires further technical assistance.

### ***Stone Creek Tipple Site*** - Lee County, Virginia

The 1.5-acre abandoned coal loading facility poses a health and safety hazard due to stream bank erosion and possible PCB contamination. The site is among the seventy abandoned tipple sites that blight the coalfields of Virginia.



## Looking to the Future

Over the next year, the MSL Working Group will be actively supporting these six Demonstration Projects. Each site brings complex challenges that require collaboration between many federal agencies. Through identifying community needs, locating experts, sharing information, and involving the private-sector, the MSL Demonstration Projects represent a national effort to develop a coordinated, collaborative approach to cleaning up the nation's mine-scarred lands. In the future, it is hoped that the lessons learned from these Demonstration Projects will serve as models for success in mine-scarred lands revitalization.



### *For more information, please contact:*

Jennifer Bohman  
U.S. EPA Office of Brownfields Cleanup and  
Redevelopment  
Phone: (202) 566-2777  
E-mail: [bohman.jennifer@epa.gov](mailto:bohman.jennifer@epa.gov)

Allan Comp  
U.S. DOI Office of Surface Mining  
Phone: (202) 208-2836  
E-mail: [TCOMP@osmre.gov](mailto:TCOMP@osmre.gov)

Shahid Mahmud  
U.S. EPA Office of Superfund Remediation  
and Technology Innovation  
Phone: (703) 603-8789  
E-mail: [mahmud.shahid@epa.gov](mailto:mahmud.shahid@epa.gov)

*For additional information on  
collaborative processes,*  
contact Lee Scharf at (202) 564-5143 or  
[scharf.lee@epa.gov](mailto:scharf.lee@epa.gov).

*For additional information on EPA's  
Brownfields Program,*  
visit the EPA Brownfields Web site at: [http://  
www.epa.gov/brownfields/](http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/)