

December 6, 2024

Re: Support for the Good Samaritan Remediation of Abandoned Hardrock Mines Act of 2024 (S.2781/H.R.7779)

Dear Representative:

We write today to respectfully urge your support for the bipartisan, bicameral Good Samaritan Remediation of Abandoned Hardrock Mines Act of 2024 (S.2781/H.R.7779) led by Representatives Peltola, Susie Lee, and Maloy and Senators Heinrich and Risch.

The White House has declared that it “strongly supports” this legislation and emphasized that the establishment of a Good Samaritan abandoned mine remediation program is one of the central directions of the Biden-Harris Administration’s *Recommendations to Improve Mining on Public Lands*. The U.S. Senate approved the bill by unanimous consent, and it was passed by voice vote in both the Senate’s Environment and Public Works Committee and the House’s Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. The bill has incredible momentum and is slated for action on the House Floor in the coming days.

Our millions of members, who value clean water and healthy fish and wildlife habitat, ask for your support for this critical legislation. As the 118th Congress wraps up, we join a broad bipartisan coalition pushing for passage of this bill. We are especially proud to stand with groups like the National Congress of American Indians and the Western Governors’ Association. The full list of supporters includes dozens of Tribal Nations, outdoor recreation businesses and associations, state and Tribal mine remediation agencies, and multiple state and local governments.

Unfortunately, tens of thousands of abandoned mines are polluting the environment every single day, posing a significant risk to drinking water supplies and public safety. Further, under existing federal law, state or county agencies, non-profit conservation organizations, or other qualified non-liable third parties – truly Good Samaritans – who volunteer to clean up abandoned mines can end up being held liable for historic pollution that they did not cause. As a consequence, abandoned mines are left to pollute our streams and water systems because of the dramatic disincentive that exists for good actors who would otherwise dedicate substantial time and resources to cleanup efforts.

S.2718/H.R.7779 would help address this challenge through a carefully crafted, narrow pilot program. Administered by the Environmental Protection Agency, the pilot program would allow for up to 15 low-risk Good Samaritan remediation projects. Good Samaritans who operate in compliance with their EPA permit would be given a narrow, conditional liability safe harbor covering only remediation activities. Moreover, the liability safe harbor is only applicable so long as the permit conditions are met, and only if there is no decline in

environmental conditions or water quality due to the actions by the permittee. With these standards in place, the legislation establishes a high bar for Good Samaritans and ensures safe, effective projects and an enforcement backstop.

S.2781/H.R.7779 is a pragmatic solution to help address the scourge of abandoned mines impacting water quality and wildlife habitat across the country. We urge you to join us in support of clean water and help ensure that this badly needed legislation is signed into law so that those who want to help can be part of the solution of cleaning up abandoned mines that would otherwise continue polluting the environment and our communities. A vote for this bill is a vote for clean water and healthy streams!

Sincerely,

- American Rivers
- American Sportfishing Association
- Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
- National Parks Conservation Association
- National Wildlife Federation
- Outdoor Recreation Roundtable
- The Conservation Alliance
- The Nature Conservancy
- Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
- Trout Unlimited