The RECLAIM Act is a powerful step toward revitalizing communities adversely affected by America’s shift away from coal. The bill commits $1 billion to community-oriented, economic development and diversification projects to help clean up old abandoned coal mines—spurring job creation and local business investment in coal impacted communities based on the needs of local people.

The RECLAIM Act would help spur long-term economic projects on reclaimed abandoned mine sites. Across the country, abandoned mine sites have been leveraged to create jobs in agriculture, recreational tourism, retail, and renewable energy production. The following are just a few successful new uses that communities have found for abandoned mine lands:

**AGRICULTURE**

In Mingo County, West Virginia, a sustainable agriculture facility is being constructed on a reclaimed coal mine that will produce commercial-scale fish and vegetables for regional markets. The “aquaponics” facility will create 10-12 full-time, permanent jobs. The project, which is being led by Refresh Appalachia and the Mingo County Redevelopment Authority, was funded in part by the AML Pilot Program and is a prime example of the jobs potential of innovative mine reclamation projects and of sustainable agriculture projects in particular. The facility will be powered by on-site renewable energy, including solar and the utilization of geothermal applications in conjunction with the reclaimed mine shaft.
BUSINESS CENTERS
Abandoned surface and underground mines had left a scarred landscape in Luzerne County, PA. After reclamation efforts, however, a business park was constructed on the land. The commerce and trade park employs over 4,500 people and is home to 39 companies, including Lowe’s, FedEx Ground, and Men’s Warehouse. While more industrial parks are not the economic solution for many rural communities, this case study demonstrates that mine sites could be reclaimed for “brick and mortar” project applications like local businesses, job training facilities, and business incubators.

RECREATIONAL TOURISM
In western Maryland, water purifiers were installed on the North Branch Potomac River, where an abandoned coal mine had been leaking pollution into the river for decades. Water quality soon improved, and today at least 13 commercial angling and whitewater boating outfitters operate on the river. This new tourism supports more than 40 full time jobs and has an economic impact of nearly $3 million on the area.

RENEWABLE ENERGY
In Glenrock, WY, a massive surface coal mine was converted into a 158-turbine wind farm. This farm produces 237 Megawatts (MW) of electricity, enough to power 66,800 households.

The lessons from these stories are clear: the ideas in the RECLAIM Act work. Abandoned mine lands can be transformed into engines of economic opportunity, creating stronger communities and ecosystems at the same time.