

Testimony of Elizabeth Green
House Bill 606
March 16, 2005

Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Natural Resources Committee,

I am Elizabeth Green of Big Timber chair of Cottonwood Resource Council (CRC) speaking for myself and CRC.

I'd like to begin by saying I don't oppose the "true" small miner. I believe an authentic small miner deserves protection under the small miner exclusion.

However I do see glaring problems with the Metal Mine Reclamation Act, which allows supposed small miners to create large environmental damage. The Metal Mine Reclamation Act allows mines under five acres of surface disturbance to operate without a permit and subsequently without bonding and reclamation. This is of particular concern to me because I live in Sweet Grass County where we have what currently qualifies as a small mine.

To give you a brief description of this mine: it is located east of Big Timber and contains 2 sites. The mine site on the Gallatin National Forest and the mill site on private land approximately 15 miles away.

Part of the mill site is a tailings impoundment, which is built to hold approximately 24,000 tons. Currently, the impoundment is not bonded with DEQ and DEQ has no authority to require reclamation at this mill site.

The Constitution states in Article IX, Section 2: "All lands disturbed by the taking of natural resources shall be reclaimed. The legislature shall provide effective requirements and standards for the reclamation of lands disturbed."

The small miner exclusion in the Metal Mine Reclamation Act currently bars the state from requiring proper bonding and reclamation for supposedly small mines that could potentially cause large environmental problems.

I am here in support of HB 606 because I believe it helps define:
What is a small mine?

HB 606 will protect taxpayers from yet another costly clean-up, will protect water quality, will protect private property of adjacent landowners and will make sure mines that can do damage are adequately bonded and reclaimed.

Please vote for House Bill 606.

Elizabeth Green