

DOING MORE TOGETHER:

The Good Samaritan Remediation of Abandoned Hardrock Mines Program

The Environmental Protection Agency's First Program Update
(January 2025 – December 2025)



From EPA Office of Land and Emergency Management Acting Assistant Administrator Tom Croci:

I am pleased to share EPA's first Good Samaritan Program Update. Since the Good Samaritan Remediation of Abandoned Hardrock Mines Act of 2024 was signed on December 17, 2024, in accordance with Congressional intent, EPA has worked tirelessly to launch the program and create a strong foundation for the work ahead. I would like to acknowledge and thank partner federal agencies, state offices, private industry, national and local organizations, and other stakeholders for their hard work and coordination as we build the program and identify Good Samaritan projects that will make a positive difference in many communities across the United States.

Empowering Good Samaritans to Make a Difference

There are over 100,000 abandoned hardrock mine sites across the United States with public health and environmental hazards,¹ many of which are in the West. These legacy sites can pose threats to human health and the environment. The Interstate Mining Compact Commission and National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Programs estimate the cost to clean up sites nationwide at \$50 billion or more.² Potential Good Samaritans have raised concerns that navigating potential liability under existing environmental laws may impede cleanup outcomes at these sites.

Following passage of the Good Samaritan Remediation of Abandoned Hardrock Mines Act of 2024 (the Act), EPA worked swiftly to launch the Good Samaritan Program. During the first year, the program laid the foundation for future voluntary cleanups through the development of Good Samaritan resources, the cultivation of partnerships, the proactive engagement of hundreds of interested stakeholders, and more. While a formal report to Congress is required not later than 8 years after the Act was enacted, EPA intends to provide regular updates to Congress to ensure transparency, highlight progress and challenges, and set expectations for continued momentum.

¹ Interstate Mining Compact Commission and National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Programs. *Hardrock Abandoned Mine Hazards: An Overview of Impacts and Solutions*. 2025. Available at imcc.isa.us/publications.html.

² Interstate Mining Compact Commission and National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Programs. *Hardrock Abandoned Mine Hazards: An Overview of Impacts and Solutions*. 2025. Available at imcc.isa.us/publications.html.

Program Highlights



9

States working with EPA to advance Good Samaritan projects



4

Guiding documents^{3,4,5,6}



10

New or updated web pages



17

Good Samaritan conferences, meetings, and webinars



Established the Good Samaritan Mine Remediation Fund



10

Pre-application meetings between EPA and potential applicants from the states of CO (3), NV, NM, MT, WA, MI (2) and AZ

Getting Started - Steps in the Right Direction

In implementing the Good Samaritan Program, EPA coordinates closely with other federal agencies, state and local governments, Tribes, non-governmental organizations, and industry stakeholders. In 2025, EPA established important program foundations with guidance, resources and public engagement. Key accomplishments in 2025 included:

- Building state and Tribal partnerships.
- Developing website resources.
- Issuing financial assurance guidance.
- Establishing the Good Samaritan Mine Remediation Fund.
- Communicating with stakeholders.
- Hosting an informational webinar.

³ Good Samaritan Applicant Eligibility Checklist. Available at www.epa.gov/cleanups/good-samaritan-applicant-eligibility.

⁴ Good Samaritan Permit Application Flow Chart - Conceptual. Available at www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2025-11/2025-ompd-good-sam-application-flowchart.pdf.

⁵ Guidance on Financial Assurance Requirements in the Good Samaritan Remediation of Abandoned Hardrock Mines Act of 2024. Available at www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2026-03/epa-good-sam-fa-final_508.pdf.

⁶ Good Samaritan National Environmental Policy Act Environmental Information Document Guide. Available at www.epa.gov/cleanups/good-samaritan-remediation-abandoned-hardrock-mines-act-environmental-information-document.



State and Tribal Partnerships

Throughout 2025, EPA worked to build strong partnerships with the states and Indian Tribes. These effective partnerships are instrumental to the success of the Good Samaritan Program. The Act requires that states or Indian Tribes with land jurisdiction for an abandoned hardrock mine site be given an opportunity to review and, if necessary, comment on the issuance of a permit. Further, EPA recognizes that states and Indian Tribes provide a deep understanding of local community cleanup goals, opportunities to leverage local resources, and the ability to navigate applicable state and local laws and regulations.



Resources to Determine Eligibility

To help potential applicants navigate the robust eligibility requirements for a Good Samaritan permit, EPA developed an eligibility checklist. Published in July 2025, the checklist assists potential applicants in verifying their individual eligibility, as well as the eligibility of a site, project and project partners. EPA encourages potential Good Samaritans to engage in site-specific pre-application discussions with the Agency to facilitate applicants' entry into the permitting process. For eligibility criteria, see www.epa.gov/cleanups/good-samaritan-applicant-eligibility.



A Good Samaritan

1. Is not a past or current owner or operator of the site or portion thereof,
2. Had no role in creating the historic mine residue, and
3. Is not potentially liable under any federal, state, Tribal or local law for the remediation, treatment or control of the historic mine residue.





Defining the Future Permitting Process

EPA developed information about the Good Samaritan permitting and environmental review process to support transparency related to program requirements and help applicants understand the permit application, review, and approval process. This included:

- Working closely with state and federal partners to identify and address information needs.
- Holding pre-application meetings with interested parties to discuss eligibility requirements, cooperating person, project descriptions, financial assurance and community engagement/interest.
- Developing a detailed flow chart illustrating the steps in the permitting process, including the separate Good Samaritan and Investigative Sampling permit tracks, as well as approval leads for different land ownership scenarios.



Permit process information and the process flowchart can be found at www.epa.gov/cleanups/good-samaritan-remediation-abandoned-hardrock-mines-program.





Financial Assurance Guidance

EPA developed guidance to help applicants fulfill the financial assurance requirements of Good Samaritan permits. After a 30-day public notice in the Federal Register and receipt of comments, EPA issued financial assurance guidance along with a response to the public comments. This guidance defines relevant terms, discusses initial and modified cost estimates and financial assurance mechanisms, and describes how financial assurance may be accessed and released by EPA. EPA's Good Samaritan financial assurance resources can be found at www.epa.gov/cleanups/good-samaritan-remediation-abandoned-hardrock-mines-program.



Good Samaritan Mine Remediation Fund

EPA, in close coordination with the Office of Management and Budget, established the Good Samaritan Mine Remediation Fund within the U. S. Treasury, as required by the Act. This foundational step will allow the Good Samaritan Program to receive funds through appropriations, reprocessing proceeds, financial assurance mechanisms, donations, and certain long-term operation and maintenance agreements. EPA and federal land management agencies will be able to better develop annual resource plans thanks to this important mechanism.





Communication, Outreach and Information Sharing

Over the last year, EPA has worked efficiently to build an online presence and to initiate conversations about the Good Samaritan Program, including:

- Establishing visibility on EPA's website with 10 new web pages, which are updated frequently as new resources become available.
- Producing engaging social media content to share program activities and successes throughout the year.
- Capitalizing on opportunities to share updates on the program, including participating in the Western Governors' Association Out West podcast and a webinar on the program hosted by the Foundation for Natural Resources and Energy Law.

To build awareness of the Good Samaritan Program and highlight its growing suite of guidance and resources, EPA implemented an ambitious outreach strategy, participating in 17 conferences, meetings and webinars, including:

- Presenting during the inaugural Good Samaritan Summit, hosted by the Colorado School of Mines National Science Foundation Responsible Critical Minerals Team in partnership with Trout Unlimited in April 2025, bringing key stakeholders together to help inform the pilot program scoping process.
- Participating in the 2025 Mining & Metallurgy Society of America's Abandoned Mined Lands Symposium at Colorado Mountain College in Leadville, Colorado.
- Speaking at the Annual Tribal Lands and Environment Forum in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

In December 2025, EPA hosted a public webinar for all interested parties. EPA covered the scope of the legacy abandoned mine problem in the United States, highlighted key aspects of the Act, discussed the program's permitting process and National Environmental Policy Act review, and explained the program's goals and implementation timelines. The webinar drew a large and engaged audience, including around 250 attendees from across the United States, and featured a robust Q&A session. Attendees included representatives from the private and public sectors, state and local governments, Tribes, and non-governmental organizations. EPA received positive feedback on the webinar along with requests for additional engagements in the future.





The Road Ahead

With the program's foundation in place, EPA plans to shift in 2026 to rolling out the first phase in a three-phased approach to program implementation. This phased approach will allow EPA to test and build the Good Samaritan Program, relying on a few initial projects from which the Agency can learn through experience, issuing additional guidance as needed.

Over the coming years, EPA anticipates that the pilot projects will illustrate the success of the Good Samaritan cleanup approach across different ecosystems, states, management scenarios, cleanup processes and media. These projects may demonstrate how voluntary resources can be leveraged to provide additional opportunities for cleanups at abandoned hardrock mines sites, saving federal funds. EPA looks forward to working with Good Samaritans to reduce the threats to human health and the environment posed by abandoned hardrock mine sites across the United States.

PHASE 1

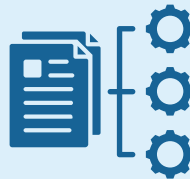


2026

While with any new program unanticipated obstacles could emerge, EPA plans to work through those and review and grant up to three Good Samaritan pilot permits to begin fieldwork in 2026.

The selected pilot projects will most likely be well-characterized by past sampling, use a low risk remediation strategy, and represent straightforward opportunities to demonstrate how measurable progress can be achieved by Good Samaritan cleanups.

PHASE 2



2027

EPA envisions the second phase building on the experiences from Phase 1 and expanding the selection of pilot projects to address more complex, but still low risk, scenarios. Five to seven permits are anticipated, with a goal of having some projects located at least in part on federal lands. These projects would require expansion of the NEPA review role to include federal land management agencies, with which EPA will coordinate closely.

Because projects in this phase are expected to be more complex, they may use Good Samaritan Investigative Sampling permits and permit conversion.

PHASE 3



2028

EPA has set an ambitious goal to have all 15 pilot projects approved and underway by summer 2028, depending on the availability of Good Samaritan project applicants. The remaining permits granted in this last phase may include sites and projects that involve coordination among multiple parties or reprocessing.

