

108TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. R. 4913

To provide for the protection and preservation of certain rare paleontological resources on the former Union Chapel Mine site in Alabama, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 22, 2004

Mr. ADERHOLT introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Resources

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## A BILL

To provide for the protection and preservation of certain rare paleontological resources on the former Union Chapel Mine site in Alabama, and for other purposes.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3       **SECTION 1. UNION CHAPEL FOSSIL FOOTPRINT SITE PRES-**  
4       **ERVATION ACT.**

5       (a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This section may be cited as the  
6       “Union Chapel Fossil Footprint Site Preservation Act”.

7       (b) **FINDINGS.**—Congress finds the following:

1           (1) Fossils have scientific and educational value  
2           and it is in the national interest to preserve and pro-  
3           tect sites of paleontological significance.

4           (2) The former Union Chapel Mine site is a  
5           paleontologically significant site that has been the  
6           focus of an extensive collaborative effort over the  
7           past 2½ years by amateur collectors and profes-  
8           sional paleontologists from the Geological Survey of  
9           Alabama, the University of Alabama, Emory Univer-  
10          sity, the University of Florida, and the University of  
11          South Alabama.

12          (3) The former Union Chapel Mine site is sig-  
13          nificant because it has yielded an unusually large  
14          quantity of rare pre-dinosaur fossil trackways dating  
15          from the early Pennsylvanian Period (approximately  
16          310 million years ago, about 100 million years be-  
17          fore the first dinosaurs).

18          (4) Material obtained from spoil piles at the  
19          former Union Chapel Mine site includes over 1,300  
20          vertebrate and invertebrate tracks, some new to  
21          science, as well as a wide array of fossil plants. The  
22          trackways are due mainly to primitive amphibians,  
23          horseshoe crabs, and other arthropods. These tracks  
24          now comprise the largest collection of specimens doc-

1       umenting the existence of these animals in north  
2       central Alabama during the Coal Age.

3               (5) An extensive photographic database of over  
4       1,800 digital images has been compiled using mate-  
5       rial from the former Union Chapel Mine site.

6               (6) At least 4 presentations at scientific meet-  
7       ings have been delivered relating to findings at the  
8       site and a monograph and 2 manuscripts for publi-  
9       cation in scientific journals are being prepared.

10              (7) It is estimated by geologists working at the  
11       former Union Chapel Mine site that far more fossil  
12       material exists within the remaining spoil piles at  
13       the site and that undisturbed tracks and other trace  
14       fossils within the adjoining high wall may constitute  
15       an unparalleled resource for scientific exploration of  
16       this ancient ecosystem.

17              (8) The former Union Chapel Mine site has  
18       now been recognized by international experts in the  
19       field as the most important Coal Age footprint site  
20       in the world.

21       (c) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are the fol-  
22       lowing:

23              (1) To grant a permanent exemption from the  
24       requirements of the Surface Mining Control and  
25       Reclamation Act of 1977 (30 U.S.C. 1201 et seq.),

1 for further reclamation of the site to the owner of  
2 the former Union Chapel Mine site.

3 (2) To authorize the complete restoration of  
4 funds held in escrow regarding the former Union  
5 Chapel Mine site to the New Acton Coal Mining  
6 Company, Inc.

7 (d) APPLICATION OF CERTAIN LAW.—The require-  
8 ments of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act  
9 of 1977 (30 U.S.C. 1201 et seq.), shall not apply to the  
10 owner of the former Union Chapel Mine site regarding  
11 further reclamation of that site.

12 (e) RETURN OF FUNDS IN ESCROW.—All funds held  
13 in escrow on the date of the enactment of this Act pending  
14 further reclamation of the former Union Chapel Mine site  
15 by the Director of the Surface Coal Mining Commission  
16 of the State of Alabama may be returned to the New  
17 Acton Coal Mining Company, Inc.

18 (f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is  
19 authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of the Inte-  
20 rior \$500,000 for the following:

21 (1) To preserve and protect the paleontological  
22 resources located within the exterior boundaries of  
23 the former Union Chapel Mine site.

24 (2) To provide opportunities for scientific re-  
25 search in a manner compatible with paragraph (1).

1           (3) To provide the public with opportunities for  
2           educational activities in a manner compatible with  
3           paragraph (1).

4           (g) FORMER UNION CHAPEL MINE SITE.—For the  
5           purposes of this section, the term “former Union Chapel  
6           Mine site” means the 35 acres of land (and all related  
7           facilities and other appurtenances thereon) generally de-  
8           picted on the map entitled “Union Chapel Mine”, ASMC  
9           permit number 3778, for permanent preservation of that  
10          property.

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