

State of New Mexico  
Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department

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**State Project to Safeguard Abandoned Mines  
Begins near Deming**

DEMING, NM - The Mining and Minerals Division of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department has awarded a construction contract to Duran Bokich Enterprises to safeguard 28 mine openings near Deming, New Mexico. Duran Bokich Enterprises is based in Elephant Butte, NM and was the lowest bidder for the contract with a bid of \$475,093.31.

"This project will help ensure the safety of visitors to the area while preserving wildlife habitat and the historic nature of the mine sites," says Fernando Martinez, Director of the Mining and Minerals Division.

This is the first of a multiple-phase project to safeguard abandoned mines in the Florida and Little Florida Mountains near Deming. The mines are located on BLM and private land. The New Mexico Abandoned Mine Land Program strives to protect the habitat of the bats and owls and other wildlife that now reside in the mines while minimizing impacts to the historical integrity of the mines and protecting the safety of the many recreational visitors to the area.

Prior to 1918, the ores recovered from mines in the area were mostly lead, zinc, silver, copper, and some gold. After that, manganese and fluorite were produced in large quantities. The federal government began an incentive buying program in 1951 for domestically produced manganese ore, which had a positive impact on Luna County mining in the 1950s.

Most of the mineral production in Luna County has been derived from manganese ore. Between 1918 and 1957, the known shipments of manganese averaged about 45,000 tons of ore and concentrates with probably thousands more tons treated in local mills. In September 1959, however, the federal government terminated its manganese purchasing program. By 1961, every manganese mine in the county had closed. Most of the mines were abandoned, with little or no safeguarding of the mine openings.

New Mexico's Abandoned Mine Land Program works across the state on both public and private lands to identify dangerous abandoned mine areas. The program oversees efforts to abate and restore the abandoned mine lands. The program is funded entirely by the U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Surface Mining.

It is estimated there are more than 15,000 mine hazards scattered throughout New Mexico that remain un-reclaimed. The New Mexico Abandoned Mine Land Program has closed more than 4,000 hazardous mine openings over the past 21 years and reclaimed numerous mine waste piles. Inactive or abandoned mine sites are extremely hazardous and potential visitors to these

sites are advised to exercise extra caution when exploring these areas. The best safety practice to follow is to “Stay Out and Stay Alive.”

For information regarding mine safeguarding and reclamation or the New Mexico Abandoned Mine Land Program, contact John A. Kretzmann, P.E., AML Program Manager, Mining and Minerals Division, (505) 476-3423 or [John.Kretzmann@state.nm.us](mailto:John.Kretzmann@state.nm.us).

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