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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **EMNRD Mining and Minerals Division Awarded Abandoned Mine Land Federal Funding**

**SANTA FE** – The U.S. Department of the Interior’s Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) grant for the federal fiscal year 2020 has been awarded to the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) Mining and Minerals Division’s (MMD) Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) program. The \$2.8 million allows the AML program to fulfill its important mission to return lands impacted by mining activity back to beneficial use.

There are an estimated 15,000 abandoned mine features throughout New Mexico ranging from shallow prospect pits to 500-foot deep mine shafts. The AML program works to safeguard and revegetate these areas for the benefit of the environment and the safety of New Mexicans. The OSMRE grant is awarded annually to make these projects possible and will help finance construction projects in and near Madrid, Raton, San Pedro Mountains, Silver City, Cookes Peak, Grants, and additional communities impacted by mining throughout the state.

“The funds awarded with this OSMRE grant keep the work of the AML program moving forward,” said Mining and Minerals Director Jerry Schoeppner. “Abandoned mines pose a safety risk across the state, but reclaiming these areas provides potential to improve the environment and increase outdoor recreation.”

OSMRE provides AML grants to the 25 coal-producing states and three tribes based on a congressionally mandated formula that evaluates past and current coal production by these entities. AML-funded projects include closing dangerous mine shafts and adits while preserving bat habitat in underground mine workings, and reclaiming unstable and eroding coal mine waste piles. Every effort is made to also preserve the historical nature of the mine sites where possible. The AML funds that OSMRE provides also support vitally needed well-paying jobs for communities in mining impacted communities.

The New Mexico AML Program has closed more than 2,500 hazardous mine openings over the past 39 years. Inactive or abandoned mine sites can be 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.”

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*The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department provides resource protection and renewable energy resource development services to the public and other state agencies.*

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