



# New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department

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News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## State Project to Reclaim Abandoned Coal Mines Begins at Vermejo Park Ranch

**RATON, NM** - The Mining and Minerals Division of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department has entered into a federally funded \$4 million construction contract with Kiewit New Mexico Co. to work to reclaim two sites on Vermejo Park Ranch near Raton, New Mexico. The reclamation work at the abandoned Brilliant No. 2 and Dutchman Canyon coal mine sites will protect and enhance the natural environment while reducing erosion and sedimentation in Dillon Canyon Creek. The reclaimed mines will also improve water quality in the Canadian River and Ute Reservoir downstream.

“Abandoned coal mines in New Mexico left a legacy of dangerous mine openings and, in some cases, contaminated soils and water,” says Fernando Martinez, Director of the Mining and Minerals Division. “This project is important to the citizens of New Mexico. It will close hazardous mine openings and reclaim abandoned coal waste piles. The careful work will also prevent contamination to nearby soil and water.”

The Mining and Minerals Division has contracted Kiewit New Mexico to oversee the clean up. Kiewit New Mexico is based in Albuquerque and is a subsidiary of Kiewit Corporation, one of North America’s largest construction and mining organizations. Both the Brilliant No. 2 Mine and Dutchman Canyon Mine are located within Dillon Canyon near Raton.

Brilliant No. 2 Mine was formerly known as Swastika Mine from when it was established in 1919 through the beginning of World War II. The owners changed the mine’s name from Swastika to Brilliant No. 2 at the start of WWII to remove any misperception that the mine was associated with the Nazi Party of Germany. Brilliant No. 2 was mined through 1954. The mine employed several hundred workers during the height of coal production in the 1930s and 1940s. The Dutchman Mine, a much smaller mine in a side canyon near Brilliant No.2, was in operation from 1898 to 1906. The mine closed in 1906 after a methane explosion killed ten men at the site.

Kiewit New Mexico will move about 400,000 cubic yards of soil and mine waste material to create stable landforms to restore meanders in the Dillon Canyon Creek. The creek was straightened during mining operations to allow for railroad access to the mines. The main entry to the Brilliant No. 2 Mine will be sealed to prevent human entry while allowing for passage of bats that still use the mine as a habitat.

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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