

State of New Mexico
Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department

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March 8, 2013

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Coal Mine Reclamation and River Restoration
on Vermejo Park Ranch Nearing Completion**
Media Opportunity to Tour Site Set for March 14, 2013

Raton, NM -- The Mining & Minerals Division (MMD) of the New Mexico Energy, Minerals & Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) announces a large-scale coal mine reclamation and river restoration project on the Vermejo Park Ranch is near completion. This project continues to be led by the administrators of the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Program of EMNRD, who are working in close cooperation with the Vermejo Park Ranch.

Volunteers from schools and adults from the Raton region will be working side-by-side with revegetation specialists to plant trees, protect and monitor water quality, and improve the health of the Canadian River watershed on March 14, 2013.

The mines in Dillon Canyon were closed in the 1950s and left a legacy of pollution including tons of mine waste consisting of black coal piles and a straightened and degraded stream channel. The coal waste would wash straight into the stream causing water quality problems for people and wildlife downstream in the Canadian River. Located close to Raton on the Vermejo Park Ranch, the site has a deep history that still lives in the memories of the miners who worked there and their families.

In its efforts to reclaim the abandoned coal mines at Swastika and in Dutchman Canyon, the AML Program implemented a relatively new approach to coal mine restoration called geomorphic reclamation. Geomorphic reclamation mimics the natural topography of the the surrounding undisturbed landforms. In this technique, waste piles are dealt with in an aesthetically pleasing manner with an end result that embodies environmental stability and ecological health. The method has been used minimally throughout the Southwest, making this work a showcase for mine reclamation in the western United States. Contractors involved with the design and construction phases of the project received Excellence in Reclamation awards last fall from the New Mexico Mining and Minerals Division.

The New Mexico Abandoned Mine Land Program is very proud of this project," MMD Division Director Fernando Martinez said. "We look forward to sharing the many

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successes of this cutting-edge reclamation with the community in an effort to educate the public on New Mexico's rich mining history, and the importance of dealing with these legacy mines in an environmentally and culturally responsible way."

The reclamation work started in spring 2012 and will be completed in spring of 2013, to be followed by a monitoring period of five years. The cost of this project was close to \$4.4 million dollars and required the moving of 450,000 cubic yards of material. The goal of this project was to move and cover the existing gob piles to limit the impacts to the water quality of the stream, recreate natural hill shapes, and establish native vegetation. A straightened stream was replaced by a meandering channel that will be revegetated with cottonwoods, willows and other native plants.

River Source, a contractor to the AML Program, is coordinating several days of volunteer work to revegetate the site with willows and cottonwood poles alongside professional revegetation experts to help create a line of vegetation that will buffer the stream from erosion.

Please join River Source, staff from the Abandoned Mine Land Program and Vermejo Park Ranch and other volunteers as they share the exciting work taking place on the Vermejo Park Ranch.

When: 10 A.M. March 14, 2013

Where: Meet by Raton Community Golf Course at the Dillon Canyon Gate to the Vermejo Park Ranch Gate (Map Attached) + Liability Waiver (Bring to Gate)

Please RSVP: Rich Schrader at 505 660-7928 (rich@riversource.net)

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.

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