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**October 30, 2009**

**NEWS  
RELEASE**

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## **State Approves Clean-up for Two Closed Uranium Mines**

*Section 27 Mine and JJ No. 1/L-Bar Mine approved for reclamation*

SANTA FE – The Mining and Minerals Division approved reclamation plans for two closed uranium mines in the Grants Mineral Belt. They are Section 27 Mine, once operated by the United Nuclear Corporation of Gallup, New Mexico and JJ No. 1/L-Bar Mine, once operated by Sohio Western Mining Company, now under the responsibility of Rio Tinto Energy of America, of Salt Lake City, Utah. Both mines have also provided financial assurance to the state for the cost of the reclamation. Mines are required to conduct reclamation under the New Mexico Mining Act.

“We are pleased that these two mining companies have stepped up to the plate and have some good reclamation plans for these sites,” stated Bill Brancard, Mining and Minerals Division Director. “This is an excellent example of how the New Mexico Mining Act works to clean up some of the older inactive uranium mining operations.”

The Section 27 Mine is located in McKinley County, 35 miles north of Grants, in the Ambrosia Lake District. The inactive, former underground uranium mine includes about nine acres of surface disturbance that requires reclamation including two mine shafts, three vent holes, and a number of non-economic ore piles, waste rock piles and topsoil stockpiles. The mine operated during the early to mid 1970's and has been inactive since 1977. United Nuclear Corporation plans to perform the reclamation during 2010. The reclamation plan will include the sealing of the shafts and vent holes, encapsulation of non-economic ore piles, regrading and covering old rock piles with three feet of topsoil, followed by revegetation with native plants, and addressing radiation hazards at the mine site.

The JJ No.1/L-Bar is located in Cibola County, 3.5 miles southeast of Seboyeta, on the Cebolleta Land Grant. The inactive underground mine produced uranium from 1976 to 1981. Most of the mine was reclaimed in 1986-87, however eleven vent shafts remained. Final reclamation of the mine will involve the closure of the eleven vent shafts, regrading, topsoil application and revegetation. This will permanently stabilize the surface and eliminate any potential hazards to humans or wildlife. Rio Tinto will start reclaiming the site this during the fall of 2009.

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