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NEWS RELEASE

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State Awards Contract for Site Assessment of Abandoned Uranium Mines

SANTA FE - The Mining and Minerals Division awarded a contract to Intera Incorporated to assess over thirty-five abandoned uranium mines located throughout New Mexico on federal and private lands. Abandoned uranium mines left a legacy of radiological contamination throughout New Mexico. The Mining and Minerals Division is collaborating with state, federal, and tribal agencies to catalogue, prioritize, and clean up the abandoned uranium sites.

“Renewed interest in uranium exploration and mining in New Mexico emphasizes the need to clean up the legacy of past uranium mining practices,” stated Bill Brancard, Director of the Mining and Minerals Division. “This project is a step forward to reduce public exposure to the health and safety hazards associated with abandoned uranium mines and to prevent harm to New Mexico’s environment.”

The purpose of the New Mexico Abandoned Uranium Mine Inventory Project is to ascertain the extent and magnitude of the occurrence of abandoned uranium mines in New Mexico. Mining activities, such as the discharge of mine water, the use of unlined containment ponds, and the crushing and transportation of ore, dispersed contamination. A systematic analysis of the former uranium mining sites is required to prioritize the abandoned uranium mines by potential or existing environmental harm.

The abandoned uranium mines that will be addressed as part of this contract were part of the legacy of a uranium mining boom which took place during the 1940’s, 50’s and 60’s before there were regulations requiring reclamation and clean-up. As more funding becomes available, the Mining and Minerals Division will continue to address the uranium mining legacy through future contracts.

Intera Incorporated is an international environmental and natural resources consulting firm with branch offices in Albuquerque and Carlsbad, New Mexico. Intera provides specialized geosciences and engineering services in three related areas—environmental, water resources, and waste isolation. The contract is for \$200,000 over three years and is funded through a combination of state and federal funds.

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For information regarding the Abandoned Uranium Mine Inventory Project or mine safeguarding, contact John Pfeil, Mine Registration Program Manager, Mining and Minerals Division, (505) 476-3407 or John.Pfeil@state.nm.us.

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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.

Mining and Minerals Division

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