

Bill Richardson
Governor

Joanna Prukop
Cabinet Secretary
Reese Fullerton
Deputy Cabinet Secretary

Bill Brancard
Division Director
Mining and Minerals Division



July 1, 2008

NEWS RELEASE

Contact:

Jodi McGinnis Porter, Public Information Officer
505.476.3226

State Awards Contract for Clean up of Abandoned Uranium Mines

SANTA FE- The Mining and Minerals Division of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department has awarded a contract to Golder Associates to initiate cleanup work at abandoned uranium mines in New Mexico. This project will involve a field assessment of over a dozen abandoned uranium mines northwest of Grants followed by the development and implementation of plans for the cleanup of these sites.

“Abandoned uranium mines in New Mexico, dating back to the 1950s, have left a legacy of dangerous mine openings and, in many cases, contaminated soils and water,” stated Bill Brancard, Director of the Mining and Minerals Division. “This project is a small, but important, step to reduce public exposure to the health and safety hazards associated with abandoned uranium mines and to prevent harm to New Mexico’s environment.”

Golder Associates, a global company specializing in engineering and environmental services with an office in Albuquerque, will conduct field assessments of the abandoned mines. These assessments are to measure the extent of the contamination and then develop project plans and specifications with the Mining and Minerals Division’s approval for cleanup, safeguarding and reclamation of these sites. Golder will also assist the Division in the administration of construction contracts for site cleanup. The projects will focus on reducing the potential exposure of radiological contamination to humans, livestock and wildlife, as well as closing dangerous mine openings.

The abandoned uranium mines that will be addressed, were part of the legacy of a uranium mining boom which took place during the 1950’s, 60’s and 70’s before there were regulations requiring clean-up. As more funding becomes available, the Mining and Minerals Division will continue to address the uranium mining legacy through future contracts.

New Mexico’s Abandoned Mine Land Program works across the state on both public and private lands to identify dangerous abandoned mine areas and to abate the hazards. The Program is funded by the U.S. Department of the Interior through a fee on active coal production. However, the Department of the Interior has recently severely restricted the amount of grant money available for non-coal abandoned mines, such as

uranium. The State has asked Congress to remove the funding restrictions.

It is estimated there are more than 15,000 mine hazards scattered throughout New Mexico that remain unreclaimed. The New Mexico Abandoned Mine Land Program have closed more than 4,000 hazardous mine openings over the past twenty-one 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 NM 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.

#30#

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

- 1220 South St. Francis Drive ▪ Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505
- Phone: (505) 476-3400 ▪ Fax (505) 476-3402* ▪ <http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us>

