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New Mexico to receive \$2.829 million to address abandoned mines

Santa Fe, NM – The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) announces that the U.S. Department of the Interior will distribute \$2,829,000 to New Mexico to remediate abandoned mines in the state for federal fiscal year 2023. The grant, distributed by the federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, is for a term of three years, and is a result of congress re-authorizing the fee on coal production to pay for abandoned mine cleanup. The fee was recently extended for 13 years. In addition to reclaiming abandoned coal mines, a portion of the money allows for the safeguarding of hardrock mine openings that were abandoned prior to 1977.

“The funding reauthorization as part of President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law signed into law last year will allow New Mexico to accomplish more mine reclamation statewide,” said EMNRD Secretary Sarah Cottrell Propst. “Addressing legacy abandoned mines will protect the environment and benefit New Mexicans for years to come.”

Coal mines abandoned before 1977 when the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) was adopted are eligible for this funding and have been identified as a widespread problem in coal-producing states such as New Mexico, presenting a threat to the public and environment. Abandoned coal mines can create such problems as mine fires and subsidence holes, even after the initial coal mine entrances are closed.

“New Mexico has a long history of reclaiming areas impacted by mining back to beneficial use,” said EMNRD Mining and Minerals Division Director Jerry Schoeppner. “Mining a variety of minerals is important to our nation’s economy and it is important that we do it in a responsible manner that leaves as little of a mark as possible on our beautiful landscapes.”

The funding will enable New Mexico’s Abandoned Mine Lands program to complete a comprehensive inventory of abandoned coal sites, continue mitigating subsidence and coal fire problems in Gallup, address stormwater flooding issues in Madrid associated with legacy mining operations, and address other areas throughout New Mexico.

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