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Commission

Harding Pegmatite Mine Project Receives Second National Award

The New Mexico Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Program received the nationally recognized "Fix a Shaft Today!" Award from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recently during a ceremony in Washington, DC. The Award recognized the New Mexico program for its work to safeguard dangerous mine openings at the geologically unique and heavily visited Harding Pegmatite Mine in Taos County. The BLM award marks the second national award for the New Mexico AML program in the past two years. The Harding Pegmatite Mine Project first received national recognition from the National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Programs with the Small Projects Award during its September 2013 national conference.

"I'm pleased that the New Mexico Abandoned Mine Land Program has now been recognized twice on the national level for the important work we have done at the Harding Pegmatite Mine in Taos County," said New Mexico Mining and Minerals Division Director Fernando Martinez. "While we take great pride in these recent national honors, the real award is that potential lives have been saved by the safeguarding of dangerous mine sites in New Mexico."

The BLM's "Fix a Shaft Today!" Award was presented during a ceremony jointly sponsored by the National Mining Association, Office of Surface Mining and Reclamation Enforcement, and BLM. The award recognizes organizations who perform exemplary work in safeguarding dangerous abandoned mine openings.

The \$206,700 Harding Pegmatite Mine Project, Constructed in June through August 2011, safeguarded ten hazardous mine openings, nine with bat compatible closures that allow bats to continue to use the underground mine workings for night roosting and hibernation. The closures also allow the University of New Mexico, who manages the mine site, to control access to the site and mine workings for geology students, researchers, and other visitors. Several thousand people visit the site each year.

Dr. Adrian Brearley, Professor and Chair of the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, University of New Mexico, stated that, "I see this project as a significant milestone in the history of the mine that will help preserve the mine as an important educational resource for New Mexicans and our visitors from elsewhere in the U.S. and indeed form around the world."

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 and restore abandoned mine lands degraded by historic coal mining. The Program is funded by the U.S. Department of Interior through a fee on active coal production.

It is estimated there are more than 15,000 mine hazards scattered throughout New Mexico that remain un-reclaimed. The New Mexico AML Program has closed more than 4,000 hazardous mine openings over the past 22 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."
