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EMNRD Mining and Minerals Division Presents 2021 Excellence in Reclamation Awards

SANTA FE, NM – The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department’s (EMNRD) Mining and Minerals Division (MMD) proudly announced the 2021 Excellence in Reclamation Awards. This year’s awardees are Peabody Natural Resources Company in recognition of its contemporaneous reclamation at El Segundo Mine in McKinley County; and Navajo Transitional Energy Company, LLC, and Bisti Fuels Company, LLC, in recognition of their holistic reclamation project at Navajo Mine. Contemporaneous reclamation are efforts that occur while mining is ongoing.

Instituted in 1996, the Excellence in Reclamation Award recognizes excellence and innovation in coal, hard rock and aggregate mine reclamation and abandoned mine land reclamation projects. The awards also aim to raise public awareness of mining issues through outreach projects conducted around the state. EMNRD typically presents the awards at the annual New Mexico Mining Association Convention; however, this year’s convention was cancelled due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

“The awards this year recognize monumental reclamation projects in New Mexico’s coal country,” stated Sarah Cottrell Propst, Cabinet Secretary of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department. “We applaud the work done by Peabody Natural Resources Company at El Segundo Mine and Navajo Transitional Energy Company and Bisti Fuels Company for their innovative projects bringing lands impacted by mining back to beneficial use and using new technologies to complete the reclamation work.”

Peabody’s El Segundo Mine has been in operation since 2008, producing 4-8 million tons of coal per year. At El Segundo Mine, Peabody has perfected the ability to establish a cost-effective and sustainable ecosystem through approximating original contours through designs, minimal handling of material, incorporating sinuous drainage patterns, erosion control, and successful vegetative growth. Peabody strives to restore the mined area to its original contours or better by designing the reclamation contours as closely as possible to the original landscape.

The Navajo Nation granted a 24,000-acre coal lease to a private mining company in 1957 and surface coal mining operations began in 1963. Over the years, the lease increased to approximately 33,000 acres. Since inception, ownership of the mine changed hands numerous

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times with all owners being non-Navajo companies. That changed in 2013 when Navajo-owned Navajo Transitional Energy Company purchased the mine, making it the first time a tribe has owned a coal mine on its own sovereign lands. Its contractor, Bisti Fuels Company, runs the day-to-day operations. The new holistic approach to reclaiming the watershed uses principles that mimic the natural erosion process. Reclaiming the entire watershed allows the pre-mine drainages to be reestablished and allows the land to be returned to self-sustaining grazing land.

MMD warns citizens to please be aware that abandoned mine features contain nothing of value, are extremely unstable, and pose serious danger, even death, to those who disturb them or enter hazardous openings. The best practice is to ***Stay Out and Stay Alive***.

Information on award winners is posted on MMD's website at:

<https://www.emnrd.nm.gov/mmd/mining-act-reclamation-program/excellence-in-reclamation-award/>

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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.

<http://www.emnrd.nm.gov>