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**Mining and Minerals Division Presents
2020 Excellence in Reclamation Awards**

Awards Will Be Presented at the 2021 New Mexico Mining Association Conference

SANTA FE – The Mining and Minerals Division of the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) has chosen two recipients for the 2020 Excellence in Reclamation Awards. Picuris Pueblo was selected in recognition of successful efforts to reclaim the U.S. Hill Mine, south of Taos in Taos County and The Española Mercantile Company, owner and operator of the Las Conchas and El Cajete pumice mines, and Matt Lane of The Española Mercantile Company, are recognized for their innovative efforts to remedy erosion features at these mines, west of Los Alamos in Sandoval County.

"The awards this year recognize Picuris Pueblo's efforts to safely and successfully reclaim and provide access to important spiritual sites and traditional sources of materials collected by Picuris pot makers for many generations," stated Sarah Cottrell Propst, Cabinet Secretary of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department. "The Española Mercantile Company and Matt Lane are recognized for their demonstration of an adaptive and creative approach in reclamation of particularly challenging sites. We are pleased to recognize these awardees for their hard work and dedication to restoring and preserving New Mexico's natural resources and beauty."

Picuris Pueblo acquired the U.S. Hill Mine in 2004 to reclaim the lands to a more natural state for tribal purposes, lands that soon will be integrated into Tribal Trust Land for protection in perpetuity. Beginning in 2006, private contractors and Picuris field crews drained and backfilled the old mine pits, buried tens of thousands of tons of mica ore, regraded more than 75 acres of severely disturbed ground, recovered a large volume of topsoil from stockpiles and hauled it to cover regraded areas, and revegetated the site utilizing carefully selected native and non-native seed mixes.

The Española Mercantile Company mine sites include a complex history with numerous reclamation challenges including loose, erodible pumice under the topsoil cover material, livestock trespassing onto the fenced reclaimed sites, and the 2011 Las Conchas wildfire that burned the southwest edge of the El Cajete site. Despite these issues, The Española Mercantile Company successfully addressed erosion features at these sites in an innovative and permanent fashion by implementing a variety of Best Management Practices to stabilize the severely eroding mine sites.

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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, and for raising public awareness of mining issues through outreach projects conducted around the state. EMNRD presents the awards at the annual New Mexico Mining Association Conference. This year's Conference was cancelled due to COVID-19. Therefore, 2020 and 2021 award recipients will be presented their awards at the 2021 Conference.

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 previous award winners are posted on MMD's website at:
<http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/mmd/ExcellenceReclamation.html>.

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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.state.nm.us>