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January 27, 2023

Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department issues updated guidelines for reclaiming New Mexico land disturbed by mining

SANTA FE, NM – The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department’s (EMNRD), Mining and Minerals Division (MMD) recently released updates of three documents containing guidelines for the effective, permanent reclamation of lands disturbed by mining in New Mexico.

The guidance documents are:

- Self-Sustaining Ecosystem Guidelines: In the Context of the New Mexico Mining Act Rules
- Guidance for Soil and Cover Material Handling and Suitability for Part 5 Existing Mines
- Guidance for Revegetation of Part 5 Existing Mines and Part 6 New Mines.

The updated guidelines seek to clarify rules spelled out in the New Mexico Mining Act of 1993. These new guidelines should make it easier for mine operators, regulators, and the public to understand best practices for successfully reclaiming mined land in New Mexico.

The guidelines include basic approaches to mined land reclamation, including strategies for remediating difficult-to-reclaim sites. The guidelines cover methods for re-establishing diverse, self-sustaining ecosystems, healthy soils, resilient plant communities, and viable wildlife populations. They also consider how climate change may impact mined land reclamation.

MMD began drafting the three guidance documents in March 2021 and produced final drafts for public comment in May 2022.

Representatives of the hard rock mining industry, environmental NGOs, other state and federal regulatory agencies, and experts at New Mexico State University and New Mexico Highlands University were specifically encouraged to submit comments.

MMD's Mining Act Reclamation Program staff reviewed all comments and addressed many of them in the final versions of the guidelines.

Final versions of the guidelines can be found at:

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

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