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New Mexico to receive \$2.423 million in federal FY22 to safeguard and reclaim abandoned coal mines

Santa Fe, NM – The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department announces that the U.S. Department of the Interior will allocate \$725 million in FY22 to safeguard and reclaim abandoned coal mines throughout the United States. \$2.423 million is New Mexico’s FY22 portion. In total, \$11.3 billion will be provided to 22 states and the Navajo Nation over 15 years. New Mexico expects to receive a similar amount annually for the next 14 years. “Abandoned” is the term used when a coal mine ceases operation due to bankruptcy, an operator goes out of business, or coal was depleted. New Mexico has been safeguarding and cleaning up these mines with grants from the federal government since 1977.

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 present a safety hazard to New Mexicans and can cause long-term environmental damage,” said EMNRD Secretary Sarah Cottrell Propst. “With the \$72.8 million total estimated funding allocated to New Mexico announced today, New Mexico will not only be able to complete a comprehensive inventory to identify more of these sites, but reclaim these areas impacted by coal mining across the state.”

“New Mexico has a long history of reclaiming areas impacted by mining back to beneficial use,” said EMNRD Mining & Minerals Division Director Jerry Schoeppner. “The additional federal funds provide the state long-term funding to continue reclaiming these areas for years to come and reduce the number of abandoned mines that present a threat to human health and the environment.”

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Abandoned coal mines can create such problems as mine fires and subsidence holes, even after the initial coal mine entrances are closed.

The funds made available to New Mexico today will double the state's resources for abandoned coal mine reclamation for a period of 14 years.

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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>