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EMNRD Mining and Minerals Division completes Tin Pan Canyon Project

The reclamation work included seedlings provided by the Forestry Division, highlighting inter-division collaboration

SANTA FE, NM – The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department’s (EMNRD) Mining and Minerals Division (MMD) has completed reclamation work at the Tin Pan Canyon Project west of Raton, bringing the land back to beneficial use and protecting the public from potential adverse environmental effects. The project reclaimed an old coal waste pile positioned next to an intermittent stream and fortified a drainage channel running through the pile with a rock rundown. The work was completed in collaboration with EMNRD’s Forestry Division and local business San Isidro Permaculture.

Straw bale terraces were constructed to slow down water runoff and allow vegetation to grow. More than 5,000 seedlings obtained from the Forestry Division were planted along the terrace rows after being amended with compost and wood chips to fully reclaim the area. Vermejo Park Ranch provided erosion control rolls made from wood chips produced on the ranch and rock for the engineered drainage channel. Design and construction oversight of the engineered drainage channel was completed by Natural Channel Design. Reclamation projects benefit local communities by creating jobs across multiple sectors, bringing both environmental and economic benefits.

“Bringing lands impacted by mining back to beneficial use is one of the core missions of our Division and this project is a unique example of our work,” said MMD Director Jerry Schoeppner. “Partnering with Forestry to plant trees, enhance carbon sequestration on this site, and employ a local business exemplifies the collaborative approach we always strive for when working on reclamation projects.”

The Tin Pan coal mine operated in the early 1900’s, before any environmental regulations existed. It got its name when an early prospector nailed a tin plate to a tree, high in the canyon, as a sign to find his place.

The reclamation work was funded by the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund, a federal grant financed by a collection of fees on coal production throughout the United States. The law authorizing the fee is set to expire on September 30, 2021. Legislation has been proposed to reauthorize the fee collection for 15 more years.



Terraces are used to slow down water and encourage vegetation growth.



San Isidro Permaculture adding compost to straw bale terraces in a coal gob waste pile.



Seedlings provided by EMNRD's Forestry Division.



Forestry Division seedlings planted along the terrace rows.

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