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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **EMNRD's Mining and Minerals Division receives national award for Mine Reclamation Work in New Mexico**

*The project used a natural channel design method to stabilize a waterway*

**SANTA FE, NM** – The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department's (EMNRD's) Mining and Minerals Division (MMD) has earned national recognition for its work in restoring and preserving the ecosystem around a former coal mine near the town of Raton in Northern New Mexico.

MMD's Abandoned Mine Land Program (AML) team spearheaded the project. It is one of five projects across the country to receive a 2023 Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Award from the Federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE). Acting OSMRE Director Glenda Owens presented the AML team with its 2023 Small Project Award at the Annual Conference of the National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Programs in Chicago, IL on September 25.

Established in 1992, the Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Awards recognize exemplary state and Tribal reclamation projects that reclaim coal mine sites abandoned prior to the enactment of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977.

“The Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Awards honor the best examples of AML reclamation in our nation,” Acting OSMRE Director Owens said. “Our state and Tribal partners work diligently to address health hazards and mitigate environmental problems affecting coal communities. These awards showcase what is possible in reinvigorating those impacted coal communities.”

The Small Project Award is presented to the state or Tribe that receives less than \$6 million annually in AML funding and completes a project costing less than \$1 million. New Mexico's project was completed in 2021 at a cost of \$979,786.79, (\$31,217 under budget).

New Mexico's award recognized work done to mitigate storm damage to a stream channel that EMNRD's AML program originally configured in 2012. At that time, AML program staff completed work to:

- Restore land in the area by stabilizing and reclaiming an extensive series of steep and actively eroding coal gob piles.
- Restore a straightened and deeply incised section of stream channel adjacent to the gob piles.

The more recent work was necessary because flooding in the canyon had caused widespread erosion to restored parts of the project area. AML program staff enlisted the help of Oxbow Ecological Engineering and Sweatt Construction to design and build a solution to that problem.

The project partners developed a design that keeps water flow from scouring buried coal waste in the stream banks and allows sediments to settle out and support vegetative growth. The project also addressed erosion in the surrounding upland areas with the addition of one-rock check dams and media lunas (rock configurations that spread out the flow of water).

"Most of the work on this project occurred during COVID restrictions in 2020 and 2021, which made for very challenging working conditions here in New Mexico," said Mike Tompson, EMNRD's AML Program Manager. "Our AML team persevered, and now the stream channel is showing exceptional stability, vegetative growth, and unprecedented wildlife use. It has held up through storms and has shown remarkable resiliency. We are very pleased with how this project turned out."

### **About the New Mexico Abandoned Mine Land Program**

The New Mexico Abandoned Mine Land Program is primarily funded through a nationwide fee on coal production (\$2.8 million per year) and well as special funding allocated through President Biden's 2022 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (\$2.4 million per year).

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**Construction of a cross vane in the stream channel, October 2020**



**The same stretch of stream in 2023**