

NEWS RELEASE

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UTAH ABANDONED MINE RECLAMATION PROGRAM SEEKS PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
IN NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT AGREEMENT

The public is invited to participate in the development of a programmatic agreement that will streamline the process used to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining's Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program will host public meetings at three locations throughout the state to answer questions and take informal comment.

Meetings are scheduled for Monday, October 15, 2007, at the Department of Natural Resources, 1594 West North Temple in Salt Lake City, from 4:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m.; on Wednesday, October 17, 2007, in the Iron County Visitor Center, 581 North Main in Cedar City, from 4:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m.; and on Tuesday, October 30, 2007, at the Moab Information Center, Center Street and Main Street, Moab, from 4:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m.

"Most historic and cultural issues at abandoned mines are predictable and repetitive," explained Dr. Jerriann Ernstsens, environmental scientist for the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program. "We use primarily six to eight common closure designs created to minimize any adverse effect to historic features. After 25 years of conducting this type of work, we know how to avoid impacts to the historic and cultural features at abandoned mine sites."

The mines are all from the same historic era, generally 1870 to 1950, with similar historic features. Prehistoric features are rare at abandoned mine sites because of the years of previous disturbance. "Mining history is a huge interest in the west and we are preserving as much as possible. What we want to do is reduce the paperwork while still protecting our cultural and historic heritage," Ernstsens added.

The Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program is responsible for safeguarding abandoned mines that present physical safety hazards to the public. "Our goal is to avoid tragedies like the recent death of a little girl in Arizona, and the severe injury of her sister, when they unknowingly rode their ATVs into an abandoned mineshaft," said Luci Malin, program administrator. "'Stay Out and Stay Alive' is our message," continued Malin. "This programmatic agreement will allow us to close more mines in less time while still complying with all requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act."

Public questions and informal comments will also be taken in writing and by e-mail. Contact Jerriann Ernstsens, Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining, 1594 West North Temple, Suite 1210, Box 145801, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84114-5801, 801-538-5214 or jerriannernstsens@utah.gov.

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