



Office of Natural Resources Trustee

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Office of Natural Resources Trustee releases Final Restoration Plan for the 2015 Gold King Mine release

*Final plan incorporates public comments on funding for four projects
to compensate the public for natural resource injuries and service losses caused by contamination*

ALBUQUERQUE — The New Mexico Office of Natural Resources Trustee (ONRT) announced today that it has finalized a plan to fund four projects with \$1 million recovered from Sunnyside Gold Corporation for injuries to natural resources and services in New Mexico resulting from the August 2015 Gold King Mine blowout.

The selected projects are:

- Construction of the Cedar Hill Boat Ramp on the Animas River proposed by San Juan County
- Construction of the Festival and Farmer's Market Pavilion at Gateway Park proposed by the City of Farmington
- Implementation of the San Juan Valley Soil Health Restoration Project proposed by the San Juan County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Implementation of the Agricultural Irrigation System Upgrade Project proposed by the Tse Daa Kaan (Hogback) Navajo Community

Six years ago, a blowout at the Gold King Mine in Colorado released millions of gallons of water laden with toxic metals and acidic waste into the Animas and San Juan Rivers. The plume of contaminated water adversely affected New Mexico residents, agricultural and recreational tourism industries, and natural resources along those rivers. In January 2021, the State of New Mexico and Sunnyside Gold Corporation reached a settlement that included a payment of \$1 million to ONRT to implement restoration projects to compensate for public losses. Litigation against other parties involved in the spill, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and its contractors, is ongoing.

To begin the restoration planning process, ONRT published a press release and sent a letter to local stakeholders on July 15, 2021, to solicit project proposals. ONRT evaluated all proposed restoration projects and on January 31, 2022, published the *Draft Restoration Plan for the Gold King Mine Release into the Animas and San Juan Rivers, San Juan County, NM* (Restoration Plan), which included a description of the proposed projects and results of ONRT's evaluation. The public comment period closed on March 2, 2022, and ONRT considered all comments received before finalizing the Restoration Plan.

“ONRT is grateful to the individuals and organizations who submitted feedback on the Draft Restoration Plan and we have responded to those comments in the final version, said New Mexico State Trustee Maggie Hart Stebbins.

“We are excited to partner with the local governments and organizations that will implement these projects and eager to begin the process of making whole communities that were so negatively affected by the Gold King Mine release.”

The Final Restoration Plan and other Gold King Mine documents are available on ONRT’s website at <https://onrt.env.nm.gov/gold-king-mine-documents/> or may be requested from the New Mexico Office of Natural Resources Trustee, 121 Tijeras NE, Suite 1000, Albuquerque, NM 87102, (505) 313-1837. A hard copy of the Final Restoration Plan may be viewed at the New Mexico Environment Department, Farmington Field Office, 1800 E 30th St, Suite B, Farmington, NM 87401.

For more information on New Mexico’s settlement with Sunnyside Corporation and its parent companies, Kinross Gold Corporation and Kinross Gold, U.S.A., Inc., visit <https://onrt.env.nm.gov/gold-king-mine-and-bonita-peak-mining-district/> or <https://www.env.nm.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/2021-01-13-State-reaches-11-million-settlement-over-Gold-King-Mine-disaster.pdf>.

***About the Office of Natural Resources Trustee (ONRT):** ONRT is a state agency created by statute to ensure that New Mexico’s natural resources that have been injured by the release of hazardous substances are restored for the full benefit of New Mexicans. ONRT assesses injury to natural resources caused by contamination and then seeks compensation from the responsible parties for restoration of those injured resources. The funds obtained through settlements are used to restore, replace, or acquire the equivalent of injured, destroyed or lost natural resources and the services they provide. For more information about ONRT, visit www.onrt.state.nm.us.*

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