



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

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## Abandoned Mine Lands Closure Plan News Release

*For Immediate Release*

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### **Abandoned Mine Lands Closure Plan and Environmental Assessment Available for Public Review and Comment**

**National Park Service, Ariz.** – The National Park Service has released an Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) Closure Plan and Environmental Assessment for projects to correct health and safety hazards associated with abandoned mines in four national park system sites in Arizona. Many of these projects, at Coronado National Memorial, Grand Canyon National Park, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument and Saguaro National Park, are eligible for funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA).

Like other regions in the American West, during the mid- to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Arizona was prospected for gold, silver, copper and lead ores. Mining districts were established, and innumerable prospect pits, adits, and shafts were opened to test or mine the marginal deposits. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, important deposits of asbestos were located and opened in Grand Canyon; and from the late 1950's through the mid-1980's, uranium was mined. The main hazards associated with abandoned mines include falling into shafts, loose rock falling from the roofs of adits, high radon concentrations, toxic metals, or inhaling asbestos. Some mine features are located in areas that have wilderness character, some provide important wildlife habitat (particularly for bats), and some are listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The environmental assessment planning objective is to correct health and safety hazards at the abandoned mine sites to reduce exposure of park visitors to the dangers posed at these sites, while preserving natural and cultural resource values.

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The Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to provide the decision-making framework that 1) explores a reasonable range of alternatives to meet project objectives, 2) evaluates potential issues and impacts to park resources and values, and 3) identifies mitigation measures to lessen the degree or extent of these impacts.

This project is funded by the ARRA which will invest \$750 million in nearly 800 projects throughout the country. Recovery Act projects were selected through a rigorous process that identified projects meeting specific criteria to address the highest priority mission needs; create the largest number of jobs in the shortest period of time; and create lasting value for the American people. The abandoned mine lands projects in these four parks were selected because they will address high priority health and human safety concerns.

The Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) Closure Plan and Environmental Assessment is available electronically at the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/coro>. A limited supply of the printed document is available by contacting the project manager at 505-988-6095. Comments can be submitted online at the PEPC website (the preferred method) or mailed to the AML Closure EA Project, Office of Minerals/Oil and Gas Support, Intermountain Region, National Park Service, P.O. Box 728, Santa Fe, NM 87504-0728. Written comments will be accepted through March 15, 2010.

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