

RESOURCE NOTES

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Abandoned Mine Land Hazard Awareness: What is BLM Doing to Inform the Public?

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Background

Abandoned mines can present both physical safety hazards and serious environmental risks. Mine Health and Safety Administration (MSHA) statistics indicate that at least 17 fatalities occurred in and around abandoned mines in 1999. The number is probably higher because there is no formal requirement to report incidents to MSHA. In response to these tragic and avoidable losses, many of whom were children, MSHA has launched a national safety program called the "Mine Hazard Awareness Campaign."

On August 5, 1999, the BLM joined the cooperative venture of more than 35 federal, state and private sector agencies and organizations to increase awareness of the hazards of mine sites, whether active or abandoned. NSTC represents the BLM

on the campaign workgroup. Although there have been several meetings to develop a common strategy and set of goals, each entity conducts outreach separately and in a way appropriate to its mission. Many have developed flyers and informational tools and have visited schools and community groups to convey the dangers of abandoned mines and to promote the message: Stay Out - Stay Alive.

Since accepting the invitation to participate in the Campaign, BLM has relied on NSTC to help with BLM's Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) Safety outreach efforts in the following ways:

Abandoned Mine Lands Safety Brochure

The AML Safety Brochure, developed by NSTC entitled "Abandoned Mines are Potential Killers," pointedly depicts the main safety hazards that are likely to be encountered around mines and underscores the dangers with actual accounts of fatal incidents and survivor accounts. The brochure is aimed at the entire range of people who use the public lands and who may encounter abandoned mines while, for example, hiking, camping,

mountain biking, or off-road recreating. Approximately 50,000 copies of this brochure were printed and distributed to BLM State Offices in August 1999. A second printing of 10,000 was ordered in December of 1999.

BLM Abandoned Mine Lands Website

In concert with the WO Protection and Response Group (WO-360), NSTC has developed an extensive and informative AML web site that can be found at <http://www.blm.gov/narsc/aml>. The site contains general information about the impacts of abandoned mines on public safety and on the environment and draws on some material from the AML Safety brochure. It describes how BLM intends to deal with the problem of cleaning up AML sites within the context of a larger watershed-based approach and provides basic information about priority setting and the budget framework within which the BLM must work.

The AML website further provides links to BLM Information Bulletins and Instruction Memorandums applicable to AML, as well as

HAZARDOUS
MATERIALS



links to many of the laws and regulatory tools that shape BLM's management strategy (e.g., FLPMA, SMCRA, CWA, CERCLA, etc.). The site also provides links to useful reference materials and AML websites containing environmental studies, ecological risk and natural resource damage assessments, and case histories of successful cleanup efforts.

The site provides for links to BLM State Office websites, which in turn will provide State-specific information on AML projects and accomplishments within each BLM jurisdiction. The site also includes a list of AML coordinators and many other features such as AML incidents in the news and what's

new in BLM with respect to AML. As States update their websites with current AML information and users provide feedback on other applicable sites, this national BLM AML website should become a great source of useful information for both the general public and for AML specialists in BLM who need technical and policy guidance.

Abandoned Mine

Lands Safety Display

NSTC has also designed an attractive traveling display that depicts the safety and environmental concerns associated with abandoned mine lands. The display consists of six panels. They are combined into three folding displays of two panels each and draw liberally on the contents of

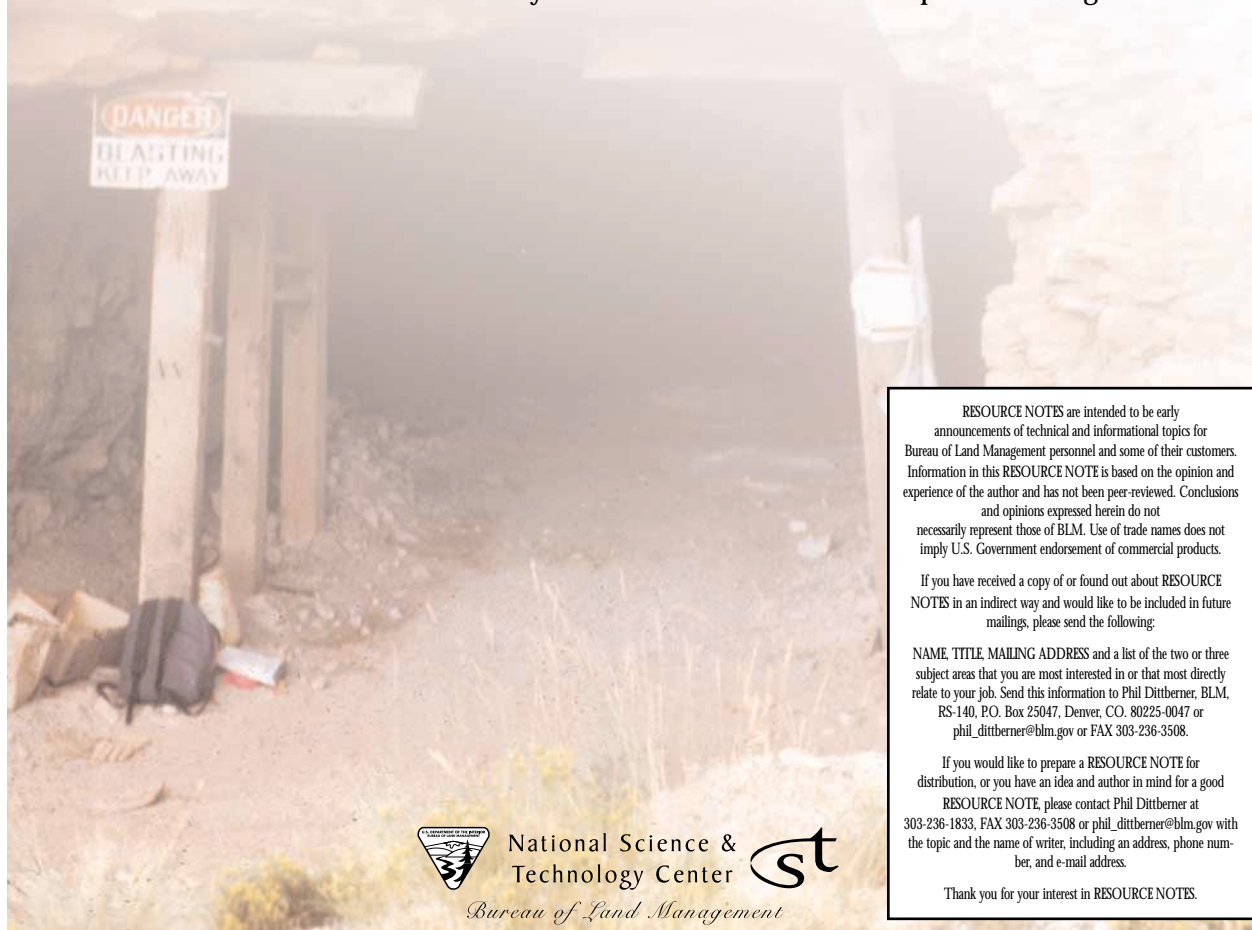
the AML safety brochure and the layout of some of the web pages in the AML website. The display is intended for use at AML workshops, conferences, poster sessions, and school/community presentations.

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NSTC Abandoned Mine Lands information available at:

<http://www.blm.gov/narsc/aml>



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