



News Release

State of New Mexico
Historic Preservation Division, Department of Cultural Affairs
407 Galisteo Street, Suite 236
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 30, 2011

CONTACT:
Tom Drake
505-827-4067

HPD is Part of an Award-Winning Agreement to Streamline Energy Development Regulations While Enhancing Archaeological Research

Santa Fe — A collaborative agreement that streamlines energy development regulations in southeastern New Mexico while affording better opportunities to interpret archaeological research has won an award from the U.S. Department of the Interior, the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division announced today.

The division said in announcing its role in the award presented September 22 that it was pleased to have been part of a partnership that developed the Permian Basin Memorandum of Agreement. The MOA utilizes GIS technology and offsite mitigation to protect cultural resources. It supports archaeological research while allowing global and mom-and-pop energy developers to contribute to a Bureau of Land Management fund for cultural research in lieu of paying for cultural resource surveys as part of the energy development process.

“The MOA is structured to build in the flexibility to pursue a wide variety of studies that rarely were funded in southeast New Mexico,” said Jan Biella, interim State Historic Preservation Officer. “These studies have a high potential of advancing our knowledge of the archaeology, history and ethnography of the region.”

Industry participation in the MOA is voluntary. The collaborations have contributed more than \$3.3 million in pooled resources to fund landscape-level archaeological research and foster a balance between cultural resource protection and energy development on public lands.

The Permian Basin MOA was developed by a number of partners with the Historic Preservation Division, the BLM State Office, the BLM Carlsbad Field Office, the New Mexico Archaeological Council, and the Mescalero Apache Tribe receiving the Conservation Award.

The MOA establishes an advisory workgroup to help determine and select studies to be funded under the MOA. The workgroup invites participation by Native American tribes, industry and researchers who work in southeast New Mexico. The agreement affects 1.1 million acres of land in an area that is a major source of domestic energy and a rich cultural landscape. The Carlsbad BLM Field Office has recorded more than 5,000 archaeological sites within its boundaries in the region alone.

The agreement allows companies engaged in oil-and-gas exploration, drilling, pipeline and utility work to opt out of cultural resource surveys for each new permit to be developed. By paying into the fund, they allow archaeologists and others to conduct other studies, including excavation of understudied sites in the region and carry out more detailed research on previously excavated sites. Funding the research is as an alternative form of mitigation to comply with the National Historic Preservation Act.

“The intent of the process is to shift compliance efforts in a direction that will simultaneously produce better science, better management and a more workable process for industry,” said Matt Bandy, of the New Mexico Archaeological Council.

The Permian Basin award was one of 17 partnership awards presented by U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar in Washington, D.C. Four BLM-coordinated partnerships were recognized with awards: the Gila Watershed Partnership of Arizona; Oregon’s Jefferson Conservation Corps; the nationwide Project Archaeology program; and the MOA affecting the Permian Basin. The Office of Archaeological Studies within the Department of Cultural Affairs, was one of the partners recognized for the Project Archaeology award.

—30—

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Tom Drake, Public Relations
Historic Preservation Division, Department of Cultural Affairs
Bataan Memorial Building
407 Galisteo St., Suite 236
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 827-4067
tom.drake@state.nm.us
www.nmhistoricpreservation.org