

Safety measures OK'd for abandoned mines at Mojave preserve

Jessica Cejnar, Barstow Desert Dispatch, 3-30-10

BARSTOW -- Officials at the Mojave National Preserve expect to award contracts for companies to install safety measures at the preserve's most visited abandoned mines.

Potential safety measures for abandoned mines at the preserve include grates, fencing, culvert gates and foam closures.

This project and other abandoned mine safety projects at National Parks across the west will be paid for by \$13 million in federal stimulus dollars. But more than 50 percent of the work will be done at Death Valley National Park and the Mojave National Preserve, said Robert Bryson, Abandoned Mine Lands program manager for the Pacific West Region.

As soon as the contracts are awarded, work at the preserve can begin. Bryson said it will take about four or five months to finish. About 1,800 abandoned mine shafts and other features exist at the preserve.

The National Park Service decided to move forward with the safety measures at the abandoned mines after a three-week public comment period on an environmental assessment report ended in February. There were only two comments addressing impacts the project will have on wildlife particularly bats, said Dannette Woo, the preserve's environmental compliance specialist. Bryson said officials have already conducted bat surveys at the mine sites to determine what kind of closure to install.

In addition to the Mojave National Preserve and Death Valley National Park, safety measures will be installed at abandoned mines at Joshua Tree National Park and Lake Mead National Recreation Area.