



NWNMCOG | NORTHWEST NEW MEXICO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

106 West Aztec Avenue
Gallup, NM 87301
Phone: [505] 722-4327
Fax: [505] 722-9211

US Economic Development District #1
NM State Planning District #1
www.nwnmcog.com
Executive Director | Evan Williams

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

May 8, 2023

Star of the Southwest Awarded to Northwest New Mexico

New Orleans, LA – On May 8, 2023, during the annual luncheon of the Southwest Region Economic Development Association (SWREDA), Michael Sage received the cherished Star of the Southwest award on behalf of the region, Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments (COG), and its many partners. This award recognizes the outstanding efforts and amazing results in part due to an US Economic Development Administration (EDA) investment. The COG was recognized for its work in support of the Prewitt Industrial Cluster.

As many are aware, our region was put on economic life support several years ago with the announcement of several powerplant closures, including the very unexpected closure of the modern Escalante Generating Station in Prewitt, NM. Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association announcement might that the entire cluster of businesses that anchor McKinley and Cibola counties were on the chopping block including mine-mouth coal mines of El Segundo and Lee Ranch and McKinley Paper, a recycled cardboard manufacturer that was powered by the waste stream and a boiler from the powerplant. This cluster represented over 600 high-paying jobs and a major portion of the overall tax base of McKinley County. Everyone knew that if this cluster closed, someone would be asked to pull the plug and turn off the lights.

The fear of losing the powerplant and thus losing all three of these major employers drove the formation a bi-county stakeholder group to get in front of this imminent crisis. Since 2017 under several Legislative Memorials, this group was formalized to support, retain, and expand the Prewitt Industrial Cluster and in doing so the bi-county economy. This work attracted \$100,000 to provide a targeted industries study, a workforce assessment, supply chain analysis, and a preliminary site plan. In 2019, the Legislature provided \$190,000 to plan and design an Industrial Park, which leveraged another EDA ACC investment. In June 2020, the NWNMCOG delivered the Prewitt Industrial Cluster Master Plan & Design, including a 90% speculative building for developers and site selectors. This site is currently working on site certification and will be actively marketed for energy, logistics, and manufacturing (ELM) firms.

During the project in January 2020, Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc. announced the closure of the Prewitt Escalante Generating Station within 12 months. This initiative led to Tri-State's commitment of \$5M to advance this work and in partnering to build 200MW solar facility at this location. Currently, the focus of the work in this area in retaining and expanding current businesses, finalizing design a new industrial park, and partnering with the State of New Mexico Environment Department and the private sector to promote hydrogen energy development, distribution, and markets.

“As a regional agency, our organizing principle is to bring the region together in the belief that what is good for one is good for all. We believe that we are stronger together and only united can we transform our economy from boom-bust to robust. This award is an embodiment of this belief and our collective work is proof that

working together works to create quality jobs where people are rooted.” – Martha Garcia, Chair, Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments

About Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments

Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments (NWNMCOG) is 50-year-old regional development organization (RDO) recognized and empowered by the State of New Mexico and the US Economic Development Administration. We serve the entire three-county region of Cibola, McKinley, and San Juan counties and the communities therewithin to improve community and economy for the region and its people. The NWNMCOG is association of many local governments governed by a Board of Directors unified by the belief that we are stronger together and only united can we advance on regional opportunities and tackle regional challenges from sustainable water supply, to behavior health, to strategic infrastructure, and to regional economic development. For more information about NWNMCOG, visit www.nwnmcog.org.