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Los Lunas Silvery Minnow Refugium Receives Award for Engineering Excellence

(LOS LUNAS, New Mexico) - The New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission, HDR Engineering, and Smithco Construction recently received a local award for their engineering excellence and concern.

Known as the 'Academy Awards' of the engineering industry, the annual New Mexico chapter of the American Council of Engineering Companies Engineering Excellence Awards (ACEC-NM) selected the Los Lunas Silvery Minnow Refugium as the Environmental Category winner based on its originality, public perception, and future value.

"This tremendous honor is a reflection of the strong collaborative efforts among New Mexicans to preserve and protect their environment," said Interstate Stream Commission Director Estevan López. "This award shows our commitment to addressing both water users needs and the environment in an effort to protect the silvery minnow population."

The 2009 ACEC-NM award is the latest recognition given to the project, including the "Best of the Best Awards" sponsored by McGraw-Hill Construction for engineering design. This past December, out of three finalists, the Los Lunas Silvery Minnow Refugium was crowned the "Best of 2008 Awards for New Mexico" in the small projects category by *Southwest Contractor* magazine.

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"Being selected for this unique facility acknowledges the collaboration between the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission and HDR's biologists and engineers," said Kenneth P. Ferjancic, HDR Engineering, Inc.'s Vice President and Director of Fisheries. "This design for an endangered fish sets the bar for restoration programs across the country."

Construction of the Los Lunas Silvery Minnow Refugium was completed in June 2008. The refugium includes a unique outdoor environment that mimics the Rio Grande and the various habitats that allow the fish to grow and thrive and that helps them to adapt well once they are introduced to the river. Traditional hatcheries do not create the type of environments crucial for recovery efforts. This facility will meet the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 2003 Biological Opinion.

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The nine-member Interstate Stream Commission has broad powers to investigate, protect, conserve and develop New Mexico's water including both interstate and intrastate stream systems. It ensures the state meets its obligations under eight interstate stream compacts. The Commission was also given water-planning responsibilities for the state.

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