

Coal Production

Coal-bearing formations underlie about one-fifth of New Mexico and contain resources that are estimated to exceed 282 billion short tons. Coal has a long history of use in the state; coal ash has been found in the excavations of fourteenth-century pueblos and coal recorded as a fuel resource for the Spanish in the eighteenth century. The Cerrillos field was commercially mined as early as 1835, but it was the coming of the railroad and the development of copper and lead smelters in the Southwest in the late nineteenth century that provided sufficient demand to develop the coal fields of New Mexico. The first formal records in 1882 indicate that 164,000 short tons were produced from the Carthage, Cerrillos, and Raton fields.

The importance of coal deposits in the late nineteenth century could be measured by their access to railroad

transport. Of the more than 200 underground coal mines that came into operation between 1880 and 1940, all but a few small, isolated diggings were connected to the railroad. Coal production in the early twentieth century steadily advanced and peaked in 1917–18 when over 4 million tons were produced. Coal demand dropped to less than 1.5 million tons during the Depression years with only a slight resurgence during World War II.

The attraction and use of relatively clean and inexpensive oil and natural gas fuels during the 1950s closed most of New Mexico's mines. In 1958 only 117,000 tons were produced, the lowest total production tonnage since 1890. In the late 1950s, the only coal-mining activity was in the Raton field, where Kaiser Steel opened the underground York Canyon Mine as a source of coking fuel for its mills in California. But during

the 1960s, the combination of inexpensive strippable coal and increasing demand for electric power in Arizona, New Mexico, and California contributed to the resurrection of the coal-mining industry. The oil cartel of the 1970s oil-producing nations drove up the price of oil (and natural gas). This added cost focused more attention on the low-sulphur content coal of the San Juan Basin.

In 1969 and 1970 the first two major units of the Four Corners electricity generating plant near Farmington came on line and production soared to nearly 7.5 million tons. Northwest of Farmington, the San Juan generating plant opened in 1971 and the McKinley Mine northwest of Gallup began providing fuel for a generating facility in northern Arizona. Production has risen rather steadily to the record high of more than 20 million tons in 1982. The strip

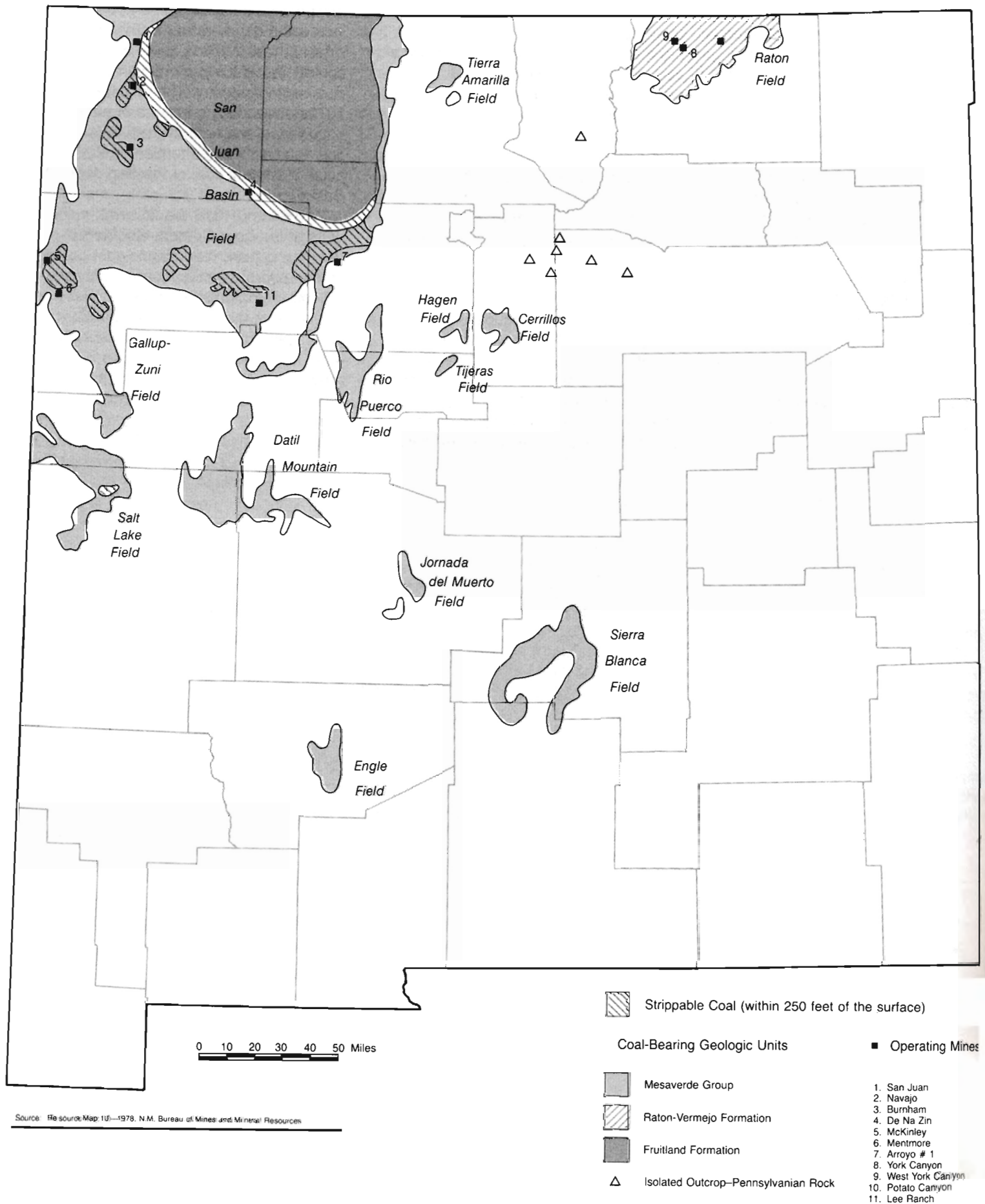
Coal Production in New Mexico

Year	Short Tons* (1000s)	Value (\$1000s)
1900	1,299	1,776
1920	3,683	13,568
1940	1,111	3,300
1950	727	3,918
1960	295	1,748
1965	3,212	10,710
1970	7,361	21,249
1975	8,785	60,030
1980	19,480	260,037 (@ 13.13)
1982	20,134	386,371 (@ 19.19)

*Short Ton = 2000 lbs

Sources: Resource Map 10, "Coal Fields and Mines of New Mexico," New Mexico Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources, 1978; DOE/EIA-0118(82) Report, "Coal Production—1982," Energy Information Administration, U.S. Department of Energy, 1982.

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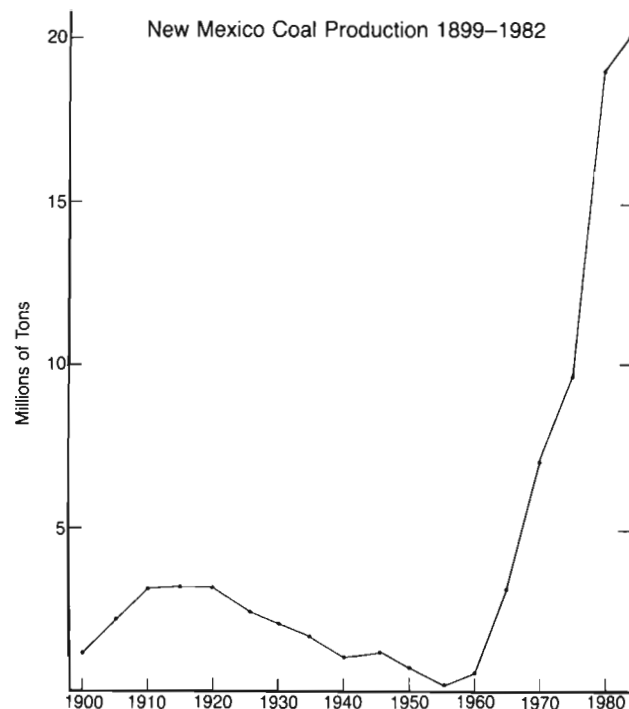
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New Mexico Coal Mines, 1982

Map Key	Company	Mine	1982 Production	1982 Employees
1	San Juan Coal Co.	San Juan	4,906,034	214
2	Utah International, Inc.	Navajo	7,144,802	569
3	Consolidation Coal Co.	Burnham	89,459	19
4	Sunbelt Mining Co.	De Na Zin	229,585	27
5	Pittsburgh and Midway Coal Mining Co.	McKinley	5,251,417	362
6	Carbon Coal Co.	Mentmore	1,164,879	230
7	Arroyo Mining Co.	Arroyo No. 1	37,000	4
8	Kaiser Steel Corp.	York Canyon	689,010	331
9	Kaiser Steel Corp.	West York Canyon	599,015	134
10	Kaiser Steel Corp.	Potato Canyon	18,887	21
11	Santa Fe Coal Corp.	Lee Ranch	Development Phase	

Sources: "1983 Update of Annual Resources Report," New Mexico Energy and Minerals Department; "70th Annual Report for Year Ending December 31, 1982," Bureau of Mine Inspection, New Mexico Energy and Minerals Department.

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