FARMINGTON — The Navajo Transitional Energy Company was recognized for exemplary mining and reclamation by the U. S. Dept. of Interior Sept. 29.

The department gave NTEC it's highest honor for activities that went above and beyond reclamation requirements to achieve superior results, reworking marginal, legacy reclamation sites to create a stable landscape, ultimately allowing the land to be returned to a condition better than the one in which they found it.

NTEC is the steward of the nearly 33,000 acre Navajo Coal Mine on the Navajo Indian Reservation. Traditional piecemeal reclamation began at the mine in 1970. When NTEC, a Navajo-owned company, purchased the mine in 2013 they inherited failing reclamation and unstable landforms. The company immediately saw an opportunity to correct the situation and do more than required to create a stable, sustainable landscape that mimics the natural erosion and deposition process of the Southwest.

Specifically, one site had been reclaimed to the previous applicable standard and was unnaturally eroding, while another site was lacking soil to shape and fill the area. However, the existing site configuration didn't allow equipment the access necessary to perform reclamation work. NTEC and Bisti Fuels (NTEC's contract miner) applied a creative solution to remedy both situations and allow for a watershed reclamation method.

The limiting infrastructure included electric rail structures (necessary to move coal from the pit to the power plant) and a local access road. The company removed electric rail overhead lines and purchased diesel locomotives, as well as relocated a portion of the road. The new road location served the dual purpose of providing locals safe passage during the weather events.

The new configuration allowed NTEC to correct the erosion problems with one pit, minimize impacts to previous reclamation, and move soils for future reclamation. Combined, these efforts allowed for a large-scale effort that mimics a natural watershed and creates a sustainable restoration landscape.

"We took a site that has already been released from jurisdiction by the agency, and put it back

in, because we knew we could do it better—we wanted to leave things better than we found them," Clark Moseley, CEO said. "Doing the right thing is one of NTEC's core behaviors.

"We have an obligation to our shareholders, the Navajo People. Our reclamation efforts present an opportunity to step up, do the right thing, at the right time, and create a better landform than what is required," Moseley said.