

January 23, 2007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad Owner Commits \$1 Million to Smoke Mitigation Efforts**

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On Thursday, January 11, 2007 Al Harper, Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad (D&SNGRR) Owner, announced a \$1 million commitment over five years to the Train Smoke Mitigation Task Force.

“I want to stay on track this year with smoke reduction. I have said we will reduce smoke by 10% every year and I am committed to that,” Harper said.

The plan commits \$50,000 cash and \$50,000 in-kind labor costs each year through 2011 starting this year. In addition, the railroad has committed \$550,000 cash and \$50,000 in-kind labor in 2010 when the low-interest loan from the current scrubber system is paid off.

The half a million dollars that will be freed up in 2010 is currently dedicated to the scrubber system installed in 2001. Julie Levy, Community Development Coordinator for Region 9 Economic Development District of Southwest Colorado, is currently researching ways to leverage the train funds to receive additional grants and low-interest loans.

Harper has asked the Task Force to prioritize how to spend the money pledged, and has given some general guidelines. The Task Force will evaluate several options for how to spend the funds, including the use of overnight wood pellets, ash pit improvements and relocation, infrastructure and locomotive improvements, and possibly expanding the current scrubber system. The Task Force completed a feasibility study in November which will be considered when prioritizing options.

The community and the railroad joined forces last year in creating the Train Smoke Mitigation Task Force. The Task Force consists of representatives from D&SNGRR, Region 9 Economic Development District of Southwest Colorado, La Plata County, City of Durango, and the Durango Southside Residents.

Task Force meeting minutes are available online at [www.scan.org](http://www.scan.org) under “Region 9 Resources.”

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