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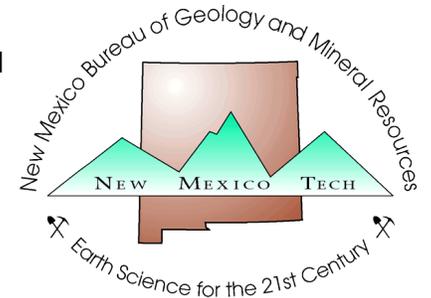
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The symposium is organized each year by the [Mineral Museum](#) at the [New Mexico Bureau of Geology & Mineral Resources](#).



Abstracts from all prior symposiums are also available: <https://geoinfo.nmt.edu/museum/nmms/abstracts>

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A Major New Find of Fluorite at the Blanchard Mine, Socorro County, New Mexico

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In March 2023, a major new fluorite discovery was made at the Blanchard mine. Culebro and Eggleton were granted access for surface collecting at the Blanchard mine by claim owner Demark. As a result, Culebro and Eggleton conducted surface and near-surface exploration at the property and discovered a major new fluorite pocket. This pocket has produced a large number of superb large to very large primarily fluorite and quartz museum specimens, some with associated galena.

After the initial discovery of what is now known as the new Ice Cream Igloo pocket, Culebro and Eggleton showed Sanders (also a Blanchard mine claim owner) and Demark an excellent, very large, botryoidal green fluorite and galena specimen that they had recovered. Funding for extraction of the Beast was provided by the generous support of Mel Huffman and Nancy Parsons, owners of The Crystalary in Cincinnati, Ohio. It was immediately apparent that they had found a significant new fluorite occurrence at the mine! Several weeks later, Sanders and Demark inspected the Ice Cream Igloo pocket, and it was obvious that it had the potential for significant specimen production.

Because this was a pocket accessible from the surface, Sanders and Demark recognized that it needed to be exploited immediately. It was also clear that it was going to be a major physical effort to work the pocket, and one that neither of us had the ability to take on. As a result, we contacted Culebro and Eggleton, the discoverers of this pocket, to partner with us in developing the find as soon as possible.

Culebro and Eggleton also recognized the urgency of working the pocket and made immediate plans to head back to New Mexico from their homes in Virginia and Connecticut, respectively. Mining work commenced on April 23, 2023 and continued more or less continuously by Culebro, Eggleton, and Sanders until June 6 (Figs. 1, 2). Multiple superb medium to very large fluorite specimens were painstakingly recovered during this period.



Figure 1: Michael Eggleton (left) and Bradley Culebro extracting a large fluorite specimen from the Ice Cream Igloo pocket. May, 2023. Mike Sanders photo.



Figure 2: Bradley Culebro drilling feather and wedge holes with an electric hammer drill to split a large slab in the Ice Cream Scoop pocket. May 13, 2023. Mike Sanders photo.

However, there was still one giant fluorite specimen that remained in the pocket, which became known as the “Blanchard Beast”. It was determined that the only way to recover this approximately 1100 lb. specimen safely was to get a track hoe to the location. With this the Beast could be removed from the pocket and transferred to a vehicle for transport offsite.

In accordance with requirements specified by Sanders and Demark, arrangements and funding to recover the Beast were completed by Culebro and Eggleton. Fred Ortega, a Northern New Mexico mineral collector and expert Taos Ski Valley equipment operator was hired to operate the track hoe for extraction of the Beast. Recovery was completed successfully and safely on June 22, 2023 (Figs 3, 4).



Figure 3: Recovering the “Blanchard Beast” fluorite specimen from the Ice Cream Igloo pocket with a track hoe operated by Fred Ortega. July 22, 2023. Mike Sanders photo.

Specimens from the Ice Cream Igloo pocket were displayed by the New Mexico Mineral Museum at the Denver Hard Rock Summit show in September 2023 (Fig. 5). This presentation at the New Mexico Mineral Symposium in Socorro, New Mexico in November 2023 about this find will describe the various aspects of discovery, collecting, cleaning and preparation of material that was removed from this remarkable pocket (Fig 6).



Figure 4. “Blanchard Beast” fluorite specimen examined by (left to right) John Rakovan, Bradley Culebro, Maxwell Novetzke, Fred Ortega, Michael Eggleton (legs). June 22, 2023. Mike Sanders photo.



Figure 6: The “360” fluorite, and quartz on galena specimen. 15 cm. across. Collected by Bradley Culebro and Michael Eggleton from the Ice Cream Igloo pocket in early May 2023. Mike Sanders specimen and photo.



Figure 5. NMBGMR Mineral Museum display of the new find of fluorite at the Blanchard Mine. Denver Hard Rock Summit, September 2023. John Rakovan photo.