



Santa Fe Studios holds grand opening

By: JERI CLAUSING | 9 November 2011 at 7:03 PM

Associated Press

Movie executives joined state and local officials Wednesday to open the state's second major film studio, **Santa Fe Studios**.

The Hool family cut the ribbon on their \$28 million facility, which was six years in the making, without any announced television or movie projects. But CEO Lance Hool said "four or five" projects were circling.

And executives from Disney, Warner Bros., Fox, ABC, Exclusive Media and Sony were among the more than 300 people on hand.

"New Mexico is back in business," said Mary Ann Hughes, vice president of film and television production planning for Walt Disney Studios.

Hughes said the industry "hit the pause button" on New Mexico earlier this year when Gov. Susana Martinez tried unsuccessfully to cut the state's film incentive program. But she says the state is back as one of the leading locations for filming outside of Los Angeles and New York because of its strong crew base, its incentive program that gives films a 25 percent rebate on production costs and its strong infrastructure.

Santa Fe Studios joins the already established and larger Albuquerque Studios and smaller facilities like I-25

Studios, where the USA show "In Plain Sight" is filmed.

One question on many minds was whether the new studio would land Disney's "Lone Ranger" movie project starring Johnny Depp as Tonto. Both Santa Fe and Albuquerque Studios have been vying for the project.

Hughes was tight-lipped about when an announcement would be made, saying only, "Be patient."

Among those on hand for the ceremony was Nick Maniatis, head of the state's film office under Martinez. He said the governor had hoped to attend but had a conflict.

Hool said he and his brother, studio COO Conrad Hool and his son, Jason, recently met with the governor and she is with the film industry "100 percent."

Maniatis recently traveled to California to meet with major studios and try to make amends after publicity about Martinez's legislative proposal resulted in slowdown in filming in the state. Lawmakers instead capped the amount of money that could be rebated to the industry each year.

"I am very optimistic about the future of film and television in New Mexico," he said.

