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Environment Department Requested to Assist New York State with Tribal Issues

(Santa Fe, NM) – New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) Deputy Secretary Derrith Watchman-Moore has been asked by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to discuss state/tribal partnership and environmental issues in Syracuse, New York. Deputy Secretary Watchman-Moore has agreed to travel to New York today to meet with state, federal and tribal officials in order to help build better government-to-government relationships.

“This honor is really a recognition of the efforts we have made in the Richardson Administration to build better ties with New Mexico’s Tribes and Pueblos,” said Deputy Secretary Watchman-Moore. “The ‘Richardson Model’ of respect for tribal sovereignty and open communication between governments is working. I hope that by meeting with local officials we can export this model to New York.”

The State of New York officially recognizes nine tribes. These include the Oneida Indian Nation, the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, the Shinnecock Tribe, and the Seneca Nation. Under federal law and treaties, these tribal governments are treated as sovereign nations.

“Tribal sovereignty means that states have to work to build cooperative relationships with tribes,” said Deputy Secretary Watchman-Moore. “This is especially true on environmental issues where many tribes have sent their own standards and enforce their own regulations. By working together, states and tribes can help each other protect the environment we all share.”

Governor Bill Richardson appointed Derrith Watchman-Moore Deputy Secretary of NMED in 2003. She joined NMED after serving as Executive Director of the Navajo Nation’s Environmental Protection Agency and as Chief of Staff to former Navajo Nation President Kelsey Begaye. She lives on the Navajo Nation in Crystal, New Mexico.

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