

**SUSANA MARTINEZ, GOVERNOR**Ryan Flynn, *Cabinet Secretary*Butch Tongate, *Deputy Secretary***NEWS RELEASE****July 28, 2016**

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The Environment Department's mission is to protect and restore the environment and to foster a healthy and prosperous New Mexico for present and future generations.

**New Mexico's Office of the Natural Resource Trustee's
Executive Director Rebecca de Neri Zagal to Retire**

Santa Fe – Today, the New Mexico [Office of the Natural Resource Trustee \(ONRT\)](#) announced that their executive director, Rebecca de Neri Zagal, has decided to retire effective July 31, 2016. Neri Zagal's decision to retire will bring to a close a remarkable career of 15 years of continuous service to the ONRT, the state's environment and natural resources, and New Mexicans.

"As an environmental leader in New Mexico, Rebecca de Neri Zagal has managed a variety of environmental resource injury and damage assessments and made powerful contributions to settlement negotiations on behalf of New Mexicans.

"Her collaboration with federal agencies, tribes, other states, and responsible parties and her fierce commitment to our state's prized environmental assets drove restoration work throughout the state, including re-vegetation projects, wellhead protections, water conservation projects, sewer line improvements, groundwater protection projects, and [much more](#)," said New Mexico's Natural Resource Trustee Ryan Flynn. "We are grateful for Rebecca's innumerable contributions to the state and her distinguished tenure as Executive Director over the last 15 years."

[New Mexico's ONRT](#) implements the Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Program to assess injury to natural resources caused by the release of hazardous substances or oil. ONRT then seeks compensation from the potentially responsible parties for restoration of those injured resources. Compensation is used to restore, replace or acquire the equivalent of injured, destroyed or lost natural resources and the services they provide.

Looking forward, the New Mexico's Office of the Natural Resource Trustee will continue to play a critical role, for example, in the Gold King Mine Spill of 2015. ONRT will work to hold responsible parties accountable for restoration of destroyed or lost natural resources.

Neri Zagal's leadership saw ONRT's transition from an agency with no budget, no personnel, and no restoration projects to a well-recognized and respected natural resource damage trustee agency reaching settlements totaling approximately \$30 million.

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