



## Office of Natural Resources Trustee

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM, GOVERNOR

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### **NEWS RELEASE**

*For Immediate Release*

**May 19, 2020**

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### **Natural Resources Trustee and Questa Mayor announce \$2.3 million agreements for water infrastructure improvements**

*Drinking water well and sewer line extensions will protect ground and surface water in Village*

**QUESTA** — Today, Village of Questa Mayor Mark Gallegos and New Mexico Natural Resources Trustee Maggie Hart Stebbins announced the approval of two agreements that provide \$2.3 million for critical drinking water and wastewater infrastructure improvements in Questa.

The funding for the infrastructure projects comes from a natural resources damages settlement with Chevron Mining, Inc. to compensate the state for damage to groundwater, surface water, and fish habitat caused by Chevron's molybdenum mining operations near Questa.

"These agreements with the Village of Questa are tangible results of the Natural Resources Damage process and the Office of Natural Resources Trustee's work on behalf of New Mexicans," said Trustee Hart Stebbins. "Once complete, this new infrastructure will protect water resources in that area, reduce the risk of future contamination, and provide an immediate health benefit to Questa residents."

"Preventing contamination to protect public health and the environment is the goal of environmental laws, regulations and permits," said New Mexico Environment Department Cabinet Secretary James Kenney. "When that does not occur, the New Mexico Environment Department and the Office of Natural Resources Trustee will ensure New Mexicans are protected and made whole."

The \$2.3 million is part of a \$4 million settlement reached in 2015 between Chevron Mining Inc. and the New Mexico Natural Resources Trustee, U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Department of the Interior to restore groundwater and habitat resources that were injured by releases of hazardous substances from Chevron's Questa Mine Site. After an extensive public input and vetting process, the trustees released the [Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment](#) for the site. In addition to the Questa municipal water improvements, the settlement is also funding projects to restore Red River Aquatic Habitat within the Village of Questa and the Midnight Meadows wetland fen in the Carson National Forest. The settlement also included the transfer of 225 acres of land called the Anderson Ranch to the Bureau of Land Management for conservation and natural resource protection.

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***About ONRT:*** *The ONRT is a state agency created by statute to ensure that New Mexico's natural resources that have been injured by the release of hazardous substances are restored for the full benefit of New Mexicans. The ONRT assesses injury to natural resources caused by the contamination and then seeks compensation from the responsible parties for restoration of those injured resources. The funds through settlements are used to restore, replace, or acquire the equivalent of injured, destroyed or lost natural resources and the services they provide. For more information about the ONRT please contact: New Mexico Office of Natural Resources Trustee, (505) 231-7542 or visit [www.onrt.state.nm.us](http://www.onrt.state.nm.us)*

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