

Michelle Lujan Grisham, Governor
Sarah Cottrell Propst, Cabinet Secretary
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Division Director Transitions at the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department

Mining and Minerals Director heading into retirement; Oil Conservation Division Director accepts position with US Environmental Protection Agency

Santa Fe, NM – The New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department announced today that two of its division directors will be leaving the agency at the end of 2022.

Oil Conservation Division Director Adrienne Sandoval has accepted the position of Air and Radiation Director for the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Region 8 Office in Denver. December 31 is her last day with EMNRD. She has been OCD director since April of 2019.

Also on December 31, Mining and Minerals Division Director Jerry Schoeppner heads into retirement, wrapping up a 26-year state government career. He has led MMD since February 2020.

"We are saying goodbye to two accomplished professionals who through their work in this agency have had a major positive impact on the State of New Mexico," said EMNRD Secretary Sarah Cottrell Propst. "We are sorry to see them go, but we wish them all the best in their future endeavors."

During Sandoval's tenure with OCD, New Mexico earned international recognition for its ability to craft regulations that foster environmental protection without hindering industry growth. Those regulations include:

- Natural Gas Waste rules that require oil and gas operators to capture 98 percent of their natural gas by the end of 2026.
- Updates to Release rules that encourage operators to take actions to prevent and minimize spills.
- Implementation of the Produced Water Act, including additional requirements for operators to file reports that provide a better understanding of water usage in the oil and gas industry.

- Development of an enforcement program to hold operators accountable and create a level playing field after regaining authority during the 2019 legislative session. Under this program over \$3.4 million has been collected and deposited back into the New Mexico General Fund.

Sandoval also oversaw a modernization effort that made OCD's processes more efficient, starting with implementing a new IT system that allows operators to submit all applications and reports electronically. Under Sandoval's direction, OCD also is plugging and remediating 200 orphaned well sites over the coming year using funds from the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

"I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to work under the leadership of Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham and Secretary Cottrell Propst," Sandoval said. "Over the past several years New Mexico has made incredible progress in mitigating climate change and ensuring the responsible development of oil and gas in the state. I am proud to have been a part of New Mexico's path forward."

Schoepner's impact at MMD included:

- Working with the legislature to create the Mining Act Forfeiture Fund. This amendment to the New Mexico Mining Act gives MMD tools to complete reclamation of mined land in the event an operator cannot meet its obligation to do so.
- Spearheading development of a Uranium Dashboard that gives the public easy access to information about both currently operating and legacy uranium mine sites.
- Working with the legislature to secure funding to hire Uranium Reclamation Coordinators in both MMD and the New Mexico Environment Department. Staffing these positions will accelerate the state's ability to rehabilitate abandoned uranium mine sites.

Schoepner also was instrumental in forging an agreement between MMD and the New Mexico Youth Conservation Corps to create a comprehensive inventory of the state's legacy hardrock mines. This inventory will simplify the process of cleaning up these potentially hazardous sites.

Under Schoepner's direction, MMD already has identified four communities in which it will remediate abandoned coal mine sites using funds from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

"Having a career in the public sector is extremely rewarding, knowing that you can make a difference serving the public," Schoepner said. "I have worked with many dedicated professionals, many of whom I now call friends, who share the same goal of protecting New Mexico's people and natural resources. I hope future generations will continue this vital work."

EMNRD is accepting applications from candidates for the Oil Conservation Division and Mining and Minerals Division Director positions. [Visit this site](#) for more information.

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The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department provides resource protection and renewable energy resource development services to the public and other state agencies.

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