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Governor Susana Martinez Announces Environment Department Secretary Ryan Flynn to Step Down

Santa Fe, NM – Today, Governor Susana Martinez announced that New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ryan Flynn will step down effective Aug. 12. Secretary Flynn served as Cabinet Secretary since 2013 and as Environment's General Counsel from 2011 to 2013. Butch Tongate, Deputy Cabinet Secretary, will serve as acting Cabinet Secretary.

"Secretary Flynn has put his heart and soul into protecting our environment and always put New Mexicans first," Governor Martinez said. "Under his strong leadership, our administration negotiated the largest settlement in the history of the United States between a state and the Department of Energy, held the EPA accountable during the Gold King Mine spill, and took action on the Kirtland Air Force Base spill. It's hard to see him leave, but we are proud of the work he has accomplished for this administration."

Secretary Flynn hit the ground running at the beginning of his tenure by holding the U.S. Air Force accountable and starting the remediation process for the jet fuel plume at Kirtland Air Force Base.

Less than six months into his term as Cabinet Secretary, the radiation leak at the Department of Energy's Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in Carlsbad occurred. Flynn ensured a rapid and coordinated response on behalf of New Mexicans, leading scientists, lawyers, regulators, and specialists to collaborate and accomplish the safe and immediate closure of the storage facility. Since then, with the Martinez Administration, Flynn negotiated the largest settlement in the history of the United States between the Department of Energy and any state for the accidental release of radiation — a total of \$74 million.

When the EPA caused a blowout of three million gallons of toxic waste last summer, Secretary Flynn led the efforts to bring stakeholders, civic leaders, and state officials together on behalf of the communities in the Animas and San Juan Rivers' watershed. When faced with misinformation

and delays, Flynn led the charge to hold the EPA accountable. He and his team initiated litigation against the federal agency, contractor, and mine owners that caused the spill; and in a Supreme Court lawsuit, he initiated action against the State of Colorado.

“Serving the State of New Mexico has been the most gratifying experience of my career, and I want to express my sincere appreciation to Governor Martinez and her staff for their leadership, friendship and support over the past five and a half years,” Secretary Flynn said. “Thanks to Governor Martinez’s leadership, we have made unprecedented progress on a number of important environmental issues.”

Flynn added, “I’m the proud father of two daughters under the age of 3, and I look forward to spending more time with them and my beautiful wife.”

Secretary Flynn is known for his ability to help foster agreements to benefit New Mexicans; the San Juan Generating Station (SJGS) agreement being one of the hallmark deals that he brokered. Under the SJGS agreement, New Mexico accomplishes the greatest greenhouse gas reductions in the state’s history – a 5.7 million ton reduction of CO2 emissions.

Revising penalty policies, revising and creating more stringent groundwater standards, developing the toughest copper rule in the nation, and developing dairy regulations that protect groundwater while allowing for technical innovation are among the many, less prominent but significant and necessary initiatives that Flynn championed. His remarkable tenure at the Environment Department leaves the agency and present and future generations of New Mexicans with stronger and more comprehensive environmental protections to foster a healthy and prosperous state.

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