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State of New Mexico and EPA Sign MOU to Explore Wastewater Reuse in the Oil and Gas Industry

Santa Fe, NM – Today, the State of New Mexico entered a Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that will explore ways to reuse and recycle oil and natural gas wastewater for the economic benefit of New Mexico. This is part of and builds on Governor Susana Martinez’s “all of the above” energy policy plan which was unveiled in 2015 – New Mexico’s first energy policy in nearly 25 years.

“New Mexico is currently the third largest oil producer in the United States and that oil is accompanied by even larger quantities of water. Clarifying the state and federal regulatory frameworks associated with its recycling and reuse is of the utmost importance,” said Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Cabinet Secretary Ken McQueen.

The MOU will clarify existing regulatory and permitting frameworks related to the reuse and recycling of oil and natural gas wastewater and to explore wastewater reuse opportunities in New Mexico. It is an effort between the EPA and multiple state agencies - the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department; the Environment Department; and the Office of the State Engineer.

“If there are better, viable uses of this water, it is important to ensure the framework is adequate to both facilitate reuse and protect public health and the environment – this MOU targets these objectives,” said Environment Secretary Butch Tongate.

The workgroup will meet to develop a white paper that synthesizes the existing regulatory framework under state and federal law in New Mexico and identifies treatment and reuse opportunities.

“Reuse of this water in appropriate applications has the potential to relieve the growing demand on our ground and surface water sources. For that reason alone, this effort makes absolute sense,” said State Engineer Tom Blaine.

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In 2015, Governor Susana Martinez developed the State Energy Policy & Implementation Plan which was New Mexico's first energy policy and plan in nearly 25 years, with the primary purpose of harnessing New Mexico's abundant resources in a way that grows the state's economy. New Mexico is endowed with nearly every non-renewable and renewable energy resource with great efficiency potential – oil, natural gas, coal, uranium, solar, wind, geothermal and biomass. Also, under Governor Martinez's leadership oil production in the state has doubled. In fact, in 2017 New Mexico produced a record 470,000 barrels a day – helping to fuel New Mexico's economy.

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