



## NEW MEXICO OFFICE OF NATURAL RESOURCES TRUSTEE

### **NEWS RELEASE**

*For Immediate Release*

**November 16, 2017**

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New Mexico Office of Natural Resources Trustee (ONRT)

*The New Mexico Office of Natural Resources Trustee's mission is to return injured natural resources and the services they provide to the condition that would have existed absent the release of contamination.*

### **Public Meeting Wednesday, Nov. 29 Seeking Public Comment on Draft Restoration Plan for Environmental Damage at Chevron/Questa Site**

**Albuquerque** – State and federal trustees will host a public meeting on Wednesday, Nov. 29, 2017 from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7688, 2597 State Highway 522 in Questa, New Mexico to discuss the recently finalized Draft Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment (“Draft RP/EA”) for the Chevron Mining Inc, Questa Mine (“Site”).

The Draft RP/EA was finalized today by the New Mexico Office of Natural Resources Trustee (ONRT), the United States Department of Agriculture (represented by the Forest Service), and the United States Department of the Interior (represented by the Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management), (collectively, the “Trustees”).

The Site is located in Northern New Mexico approximately five miles east of the town of Questa, adjacent to the Red River. The Site also includes mine tailing ponds located approximately nine miles west of the mine. The Site is the location of a large groundwater contamination plume that will require treatment in perpetuity to mitigate human health risks. That treatment will be conducted under the oversight of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to accomplish remediation.

Separately, restoration will be accomplished through the Draft RP/EA which describes how the Trustees for the Questa Mine Site Natural Resource Damage Assessment will use natural resource damages settlement funds for the restoration, rehabilitation, replacement, or acquisition of equivalent natural resources and services that were injured by the release of hazardous substances from the Site. The Trustees’ overall restoration objective is to compensate the public for these injuries through the implementation of restoration projects that provide comparable services in or near the Site. In order to meet this objective, the Trustees must identify, screen, and evaluate restoration alternatives (i.e., restoration projects).

The Trustees held a public informational meeting in Taos on April 27, 2016, followed by an open house on April 28, 2016, seeking proposals. They then carefully evaluated the proposals that were submitted by the deadline

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of August 1, 2016. The Trustees have completed the evaluation of groundwater and aquatic resources restoration projects submitted and have documented descriptions of the projects and the results of the evaluation in the Draft RP/EA. The Trustees are now seeking public comment on the Draft RP/EA. Funding for the restoration projects derives from a \$4,000,000 settlement for natural resource damages reached between the Trustees and the Responsible Party, Chevron Mining, Inc.

More information regarding the Site and a copy of the Draft RP/EA is available on the internet at <https://onrt.env.nm.gov/chevron-molycorp-mine/> or may be requested from the NM Office of Natural Resources Trustee, 121 Tijeras Ave. NE, Ste. 1000, Albuquerque, NM 87102, (505) 222-9546. Copies may also be viewed at the following public libraries: Questa Public Library, 6 ½ Municipal Park Road, Questa, New Mexico 87556 and Taos Public Library, 402 Camino De La Placitas, Taos, New Mexico 87571.

The public is also invited to send written comments on the contents of the Draft RP/EA. The public comment period is open for 30 days, starting on November 17, 2017 and ending on December 18, 2017. Comments must be submitted in writing to the New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, 2105 Osuna Rd NE, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87113 by December 18, 2017 at 4:00 p.m. Mountain Standard Time. Written comments may also be sent by fax to: (505) 346-2542. Comments may also be submitted via e-mail to: [nmesfo@fws.gov](mailto:nmesfo@fws.gov) with "Questa Mine Site RP/EA" in the subject line. If submitting requests electronically, please include name and mailing address.

After the Trustees consider public comments the Trustees will select a restoration alternative and finalize the RP/EA. A summary of public comments and the Trustees' responses to those comments will be included in the final RP/EA.

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*About ONRT. The ONRT is a small state agency administratively attached to the New Mexico Environment Department that works to ensure that New Mexico's natural resources that were injured because of contamination are restored for the full benefit of New Mexicans. New Mexico's Environment Department Secretary Butch Tongate serves also as the state's Natural Resources Trustee. The ONRT assesses injury to natural resources caused by the release of hazardous substances and then seeks compensation from the potentially responsible parties for restoration of those injured resources. The funds obtained 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: Trais Kliphuis, Executive Director, New Mexico Office of Natural Resources Trustee, (505) 222-9572 or visit [www.onrt.state.nm.us](http://www.onrt.state.nm.us).*

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