



Stephanie Garcia Richard, State Land Commissioner
State of New Mexico

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Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard Announces Four Appointments

SANTA FE, NM – Commissioner of Public Lands Stephanie Garcia Richard took office on Tuesday, January 1, 2019 and has announced her first appointments to help oversee the State Land Office. The State Land Office has 14 exempt positions, which serve at the pleasure of the Commissioner of Public Lands.

In her first act as land commissioner, Stephanie Garcia Richard has named her choice for Deputy Commissioner of Operations, Deputy Commissioner of Public Affairs, Assistant Commissioner of Administrative Services, and Assistant Commissioner of Surface Resources.

“This is an exciting time for our state, our land, and our beneficiaries. I am honored to have the experienced Sunalei Stewart returning as Deputy Commissioner of Operations and Donna Sandoval transitioning from DoIT to the SLO as Assistant Commissioner of Administrative Services. It is critical that we ensure continuity as we transform the State Land Office,” said Commissioner Garcia Richard. “I ran on a commitment to focus on the preservation of our land, wildlife, and water and am excited to have an experienced ecologist like Howard Gross taking the lead to oversee the division that handles outdoor recreation, grazing, and environmental protections,” noted Commissioner Garcia Richard. Part of the success of this office rests on our ability to address constituency issues and ensure policy changes that guarantee we maximize revenue made from our state lands. For the last six years, I have worked with Tarin Nix to bring about real change in our legislature and ensure the needs of my district were met. I am excited to officially bring her on as Deputy Commissioner of Public Affairs,” said Commissioner Garcia Richard.

Sunalei Stewart has been appointed Deputy Commissioner of Operations. Previously, Mr. Stewart was the Chief of Staff and Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for the City of Albuquerque under Mayor Keller, and the Chief of Staff of the State Auditor’s Office under then-Auditor Keller. Mr. Stewart also served as the Deputy Land Commissioner for the State Land Office in the Powell Administration. In addition, Mr. Stewart held various positions,

including Legislative Director and Counsel, in the office of former Senator Jeff Bingaman. Mr. Stewart worked for the U.S. Department of State, Office of the Legal Adviser, prior to joining the Senator's staff. He received his B.A. in political science and philosophy from the University of Arizona, and both his J.D. and M.A. (international affairs) from American University.

Tarin Nix has been appointed Deputy Commissioner of Public Affairs. Ms. Nix has owned and operated a successful consulting firm that oversaw political campaigns, issue-advocacy campaigns, and policy initiatives for over a decade. Ms. Nix has served as chief analyst for the New Mexico State House Education Committee under the leadership of Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard when she served as Chairwoman. She received her B.A. in political science and women's studies from the University of Alabama and her Master's in Social Work with a dual specialization in public policy and nonprofit management from The University of Texas in Austin.

Donna Sandoval, CGFM has been appointed Assistant Commissioner of Administrative Services. Mrs. Sandoval was most recently the Administrative Services Division Director and Chief Financial Officer for the New Mexico Department of Information Technology. Mrs. Sandoval has worked at the New Mexico Human Services Department as Deputy Administrative Services Director and Co-Chief Financial Officer. Mrs. Sandoval received her Bachelor of Business Administration and Accounting from the University of New Mexico and her Master's in Business Administration from the College of Santa Fe.

Howard Gross has been appointed Assistant Commissioner of Surface Resources. Before coming to the State Land Office, Mr. Gross worked for nearly 10 years as a Senior Program Manager at the Western Conservation Foundation. Prior to that, Mr. Gross served as the Executive Director of the Forest Stewards Guild, a national professional membership organization that promotes Excellent Forestry. He also spent four years representing the National Parks Conservation Association in the California Desert and four years as Executive Director of HawkWatch International, which works to monitor and protect birds of prey and their habitats. Mr. Gross received his B.S. in Mathematical Sciences from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and an M.S. in Watershed Science from Utah State University.

Oil, gas, and mineral production, ranching and farming, and commercial development on State Trust Lands support public schools, seven universities, New Mexico Military Institute, New Mexico School for the Deaf, New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, three hospitals, correctional facilities, water conservation projects, and public building construction and repair. In fiscal year 2018, the State Land Office collected \$852 million from lease payments, oil and gas lease sale earnings, rights-of-way, permits, interest, fees, and oil, gas, and mineral royalties.