

For Immediate Release:

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**AG Balderas Announces Natural Resources and Environmental Equity Initiative,
Appointment of Equity Advisory Council**

ALBUQUERQUE, NM--Today, Attorney General Hector Balderas announced that the New Mexico Office of the Attorney General is launching an initiative focused on equity and access to justice concerns for minority communities in the natural resources and environmental protection arenas. The Office of the Attorney General has started by appointing an advisory council comprising representatives for marginalized communities who have historically been ignored in policy and decision making in these areas, and who bear disproportionately negative consequences from the state and federal policies that do not adequately protect their health, safety, and welfare. The council will engage a wide range of stakeholders from these communities and make recommendations to the Office of the Attorney General for direct engagement of state and federal agencies to address issues of racism and equity in natural resources and environmental policy.

"For far too long, state and federal government has systematically oppressed and ignored the needs of Indigenous, Hispanic, Black, and other communities of color in natural resources and environmental policy," said Attorney General Balderas. "These communities rarely benefit from the positive aspects of state and federal policies, and always directly bear the brunt of the negative impacts on their health and safety. Together we will leverage the authority of the Attorney General's office to break down barriers and put these communities at the head of the decision-making table on these issues."

The purpose of this initiative is to demand equity in conservation, environmental protection, and land and resource management and use. Race, class, and gender have profound effects on people's environmental experiences, and consequently their access to regulatory and legislative processes, activism, and environmental discourses. While there has been incredible work on equity in outdoor recreation, the future of conservation and environmental protection depends upon deconstruction of systemically racist policies that disproportionately ignore and outright harm Indigenous, Hispanic, Black, and other communities of color. This initiative will focus on making conservation, environmental protection, and natural resources management relevant and meaningful to all New Mexicans.

This work will start with, and be led by, the very communities who have been systematically excluded from government. The Equity Advisory Council will assist in the

review and development of federal and state land and environmental resource policies and practices, and make recommendations to the Office of the Attorney General on engagement of state and federal agencies on matters of environmental justice that will center the needs and views of traditionally marginalized New Mexican communities. The Office of the Attorney General will use its authority as both the chief legal and law enforcement office of the State to direct steps through advocacy, litigation, and representation to implement the recommendations of the Council. The Council comprises the following members:

- Arturo Archuleta, NM Land Grant Council Program Manager
- Paula Garcia, NM Acequia Association Executive Director
- Derrick Lente, NM State Representative
- Javier Martinez, NM State Representative
- Rita Padilla-Gutierrez, NM Livestock Board
- Amira Rasheed, Community Advocate
- Angelica Rubio, NM State Representative
- Daniel Tso, Navajo Nation Council
- Devont'e Watson, Equity Consultant, Watson & Associates International, LLC

Together, the Council and the Office of the Attorney General will develop a more inclusive, culturally centered, broad-based environmental agenda that will center the needs and views of marginalized communities; identify and analyze racial, class, and gender disparities in environmental, natural resource, and conservation policy; and work to improve resource allocation, quality of life, autonomy and self-determination, human rights, and fairness.

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