



MEMORANDUM

Date: January 20, 2023

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: Jan Leshner 
County Administrator

Re: **Appointment of Interim Director of Pima County Department of Environmental Quality**

On January 9, 2023, I notified the Board of Supervisors, by electronic mail, of the sudden immediate and unexpected retirement of Barbara Escobar due to personal health considerations. Ms. Escobar served as Director of the Pima County Department of Environmental Quality (PDEQ) since January 4, 2022. She served Pima County with distinction for the last 12 years, including as Deputy Director for our Regional Waste Water Department. We certainly wish her and her family the very best.

This sudden vacancy comes at a critical time for the Department. This unit administers the air quality monitoring, solid waste and water programs, as well as managing a variety of delegation agreements with the State. Additionally, PDEQ is responsible for code compliance for itself as well as on behalf of the Development Services Department and for plan review and approval of public and semipublic aquatic facilities on behalf of the Department of Health.

Given the critical role of this department and the complex and technical nature of its work, I have authorized the hire of Ursula Nelson as Interim Director of Environmental Quality, on a short-term, not-to-exceed six-month employment contract. This appointment is effective January 23, 2023.

Ms. Nelson led this department for over 16 years before her retirement on January 4, 2022. She will provide seamless leadership during this interim period. Given her expertise and tenure in the field, she will also work with Dr. Francisco Garcia to conduct a national search to recruit and hire a permanent director. This process will begin immediately.

JKL/dym

c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator
Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer
Steve Holmes, Deputy County Administrator
Terry Cullen, MD, MS, Public Health Director, Health Department
Carla Blackwell, Director, Development Services