



# State of Utah Department of Natural Resources

## Media Contact

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## Mick Thomas appointed director of the Division of Oil, Gas and Mining

SALT LAKE CITY (Jan. 8, 2024) – Utah Department of Natural Resources Executive Director Joel Ferry has appointed Richard “Mick” Thomas as the new director of the Division of Oil, Gas and Mining. He begins his new position today and replaces John Baza, who served as the division’s director for 18 years and retired after 30 years in the industry.

“Mick brings a wealth of technical, regulatory and industry experience that will help shape the future of Utah’s energy landscape,” Ferry said. “His proactive collaboration with state leaders and stakeholders underscores his commitment to driving positive change.”

Most recently, Thomas served as the division administrator for the Idaho Department of Lands and was the lead for the Mining, Navigable Waterways and Oil and Gas industry. During this time, he developed and implemented the state’s regulatory framework for mineral, navigable waters, and oil and gas, including regularly evaluating Idaho’s statutes, rules and policies. Advocating for the safe and efficient development of Idaho’s resources in a manner that protects both the resource and correlative rights of the state was a top priority.

“As the new director, I am dedicated to ensuring the prosperity of our industries while safeguarding the integrity of our natural resources,” Thomas said. “I look forward to cultivating strong relationships with the governor’s office, legislators, industry and stakeholders. Together, we will navigate the complexities of resource management, promoting responsible practices that prioritize the well-being of our citizens and the diverse landscapes that define our state.”

Thomas also served as secretary to Idaho’s Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, served on the Idaho Geological Survey Advisory Board, and was the official Idaho delegate to the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission.

Prior to his assignment in Idaho, Thomas supervised the minerals program at the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources, which included planning, directing and administering Hawaii’s geothermal energy program.

Thomas is a native of southwest Missouri and completed both his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in geochemistry at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis. After graduation, Thomas worked as an operations geologist in the oil and gas industry for multiple companies, including as a geology team lead over the mid-continent with Devon Energy in Oklahoma City.

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## About the Utah Department of Natural Resources

The Utah Department of Natural Resources is one of the state's largest agencies and helps ensure the quality of life of Utah residents by managing and protecting the state's natural resources. The department includes eight divisions: State Parks; Outdoor Recreation; Oil, Gas and Mining; Forestry, Fire and State Lands; Water Resources; Water Rights; Wildlife Resources and the Utah Geological Survey. The Public Lands Policy Coordinating Office and the Office of Energy Development were also aligned with DNR in 2021 to provide closer coordination.



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