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84114-2220

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For Immediate Release

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Governor's head of Environmental Quality to step down

SALT LAKE CITY (April 23, 2015) – After serving six years as executive director of the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Amanda Smith will leave her post effective on May 22 to pursue opportunities in the private sector.

“It’s a difficult decision because I have enjoyed working with such a high caliber staff at DEQ,” Smith said. “But I leave at a time when many great things set the stage for a smooth transition.”

Gov. Gary Herbert praised Smith for her ability to solve environmental issues through collaboration and improve the agency’s efficiency by removing bureaucratic roadblocks, which in the end result in better environmental protection.

“Amanda’s leadership on environmental issues, perhaps most notably air quality, has changed the conversation in this state,” Gov. Herbert said. “She has been a valuable member of my Cabinet and a tremendous public servant who realizes we face unique challenges in Utah and we are determined to find Utah solutions. Her work to improve air quality in the Uinta Basin is a prime example of her leadership. We are not simply waiting for the federal government to declare the area to be in nonattainment of standards, we are making significant improvements now.”

Smith has overseen sweeping changes in the agency to provide industry with timely permits and speedy appeal procedures as well as re-organization of the regulatory boards. Additionally, she has been at the helm through some of the most controversial environmental issues: depleted uranium disposal, an air quality State Implementation Plan for PM2.5 and the Red Butte oil spill.

“Amanda has always been open to new ways of solving problems and listening to all perspectives,” said Steve Sands, chairman of the air quality board and director of external affairs for Rio Tinto Kennecott.

During Smith’s tenure, DEQ has made it a priority to increase transparency and public involvement by instituting more formal public dialogue around controversial issues, and through posting information online.

“While we haven't agreed with every decision the DEQ had made, we've always known that Amanda is motivated by a genuine desire to protect public health and the environment and we've appreciated her intelligence, frankness and willingness to consult with advocates.”said Matt Pacenza, director of HEAL Utah.

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