1	PUBLIC HEARING
2	STATE OF NEW MEXICO
3	OIL CONSERVATION COMMISSION
4	
5	Pecos Hall, 1st Floor, Wendell Chino Building
6	1220 S. Saint Francis Drive
7	Santa Fe, New Mexico
8	
9	IN THE MATTER OF:
10	PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO 19.15.2, 19.15.5
	19.15.8, 19.15.9 and 19.15.25 NMAC
11	
12	
13	
	TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
14	
	October 28, 2025
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17	
	HEARD BEFORE:
18	
	HEARING OFFICER FELICIA ORTH
19	
20	COMMISSION MEMBERS:
21	ALBERT CHANG, Chair
	GREGORY BLOOM, Member (virtual)
22	DR. WILLIAM AMPOMAH, Member
23	
	COUNSEL TO THE COMMISSION:
24	
6 -	MR. ZACHARY SHANDLER, ESQ.
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1	INDEX
2	PAGE
3	TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS5
4	
5 6 7	OPENING STATEMENT By Mr. Suazo167 THE WITNESSES TIFFANY WALLACE
8	Direct Examination by Mr. Rankin
9	Cross-Examination by Mr. Moore
10	Cross-Examination by Ms. Suazo
11 12	Examination by Commissioner Ampomah121 KELLY MONTGOMERY
13	Direct Examination by Mr. Tucker136 Cross-Examination by Ms. O'Grady146 Cross-Examination by Mr. Hall149
14	Cross-Examination by Mr. Moore
15	Examination by Commissioner Ampomah159 Examination by Commissioner Bloom163
16	DAN ARTHUR
17	Direct Examination by Mr. Suazo
18 19	ADMITTED EXHIBITS
20	Oxy, USA Exhibits A and B
21	NMOGA Arthur Direct Testimony/Appendix A and Rebuttal Testimony/Appendix A238
22 23 24 25	TRANSCRIPT CERTIFICATE288
	Page 4

1	(On the record at 9:00 a.m.)
2	TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
3	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Good morning. My
4	name is Felicia Orth, hearing officer appointed by
5	the Oil Conservation Commission to conduct a hearing
6	in OCC 24683 relating to well plugging and financial
7	assurance.
8	We are on day seven of the hearing and
9	have come to another public comment session. A few
10	things about public comment. I will ask you to spell
11	your first and last name for the transcript. I will
12	ask you, pursuant to Commission rules, to swear or
13	affirm that you will tell the truth and I will ask
14	you to keep your comments to three minutes.
15	In the event you have more to say, you
16	have at least the rest of this week to submit written
17	public comment to the Commission administrator,
18	Sheila Apodaca.
19	So I have four names of folks who
20	indicated to Ms. Apodaca that they wish to speak
21	during this session, Ella Joan Fenoglio.
22	Thank you, Ms. Fenoglio. Can you unmute
23	yourself? You should have permission to unmute
24	yourself. And you might have to press
25	control-shift-M to unmute. That apparently works for

1	some folks.
2	MS. FENOGLIO: Hello?
3	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Yes.
4	MS. FENOGLIO: Can you hear me now?
5	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Yes, I can. Thank
6	you very much. Would you spell your first and last
7	name, please, for the transcript.
8	MS. FENOGLIO: Most certainly. Ella Joan,
9	E-L-L-A, J-O-A-N. And my last name is Fenoglio, F,
10	as in Frank, E-N-O-G-L-I-O. How would I open my
11	video?
12	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Well, there should be
13	a button that has a little camera sign on it that
14	allows you to turn on your camera.
15	In the meantime, do you swear or affirm
16	to tell the truth?
17	MS. FENOGLIO: I do so swear, Madam.
18	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: All right.
19	MS. FENOGLIO: I see no camera button. I'm
20	new to Teams, so I'm probably not doing this right.
21	Okay. I can speak when you're ready.
22	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Anytime. Thank you.
23	MS. FENOGLIO: My name is Ella Joan
24	Fenoglio. I'm a member of the Sierra Club, and I am
25	here to speak about the proposed bonding and cleanup
	Page 6

1	rule changes that are being considered. I'm here to
2	comment in support of rulemaking to modernize
3	New Mexico's bonding and cleanup rules.
4	I was taught as a young child, you clean
5	up your messes, put away your toys. I'm asking that
6	you make rules that require oil and gas providers and
7	anyone else who opens wells and then closes them
8	without cleaning them up, that that be required at
9	the beginning, a bond sufficient to cover the cost.
10	That's very important that we hold our
11	corporations that come to New Mexico to leave
12	New Mexico clean and pristine, the way they found it.
13	And I invite you to make those rules in favor of
14	New Mexico's environment. Thank you.
15	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you very much.
16	The next name I have is Shannon Patrick.
17	Is Shannon Patrick on the platform? Perhaps not.
18	Okay. Lawrence Hittle.
19	MR. HITTLE: Yes. My name is Lawrence
20	Hittle, L-A-W-R-E-N-C-E, H-I-T-T-L-E.
21	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Do you swear or
22	affirm to tell the truth?
23	MR. HITTLE: Yes I do.
24	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you. Go ahead.
25	MR. HITTLE: My name is Lawrence Hittle, and
	Page 7

1	I've lived in New Mexico for 68 years. It's
2	beautiful state. I've owned two businesses. I've
3	worked in a cheese manufacturing plant. And I have
4	taught at Eastern New Mexico University as an adjunct
5	professor for industrial engineering technology.
6	I've raised my family here. New Mexico is very
7	important to me.
8	One of the things that does make me sad
9	is that our level of public education is low. And
10	the oil and gas industry does tremendously support
11	our education system. So I'm concerned that
12	regulations are completely piled on to the oil and
13	gas industry or any other industry because
14	regulations in and of themselves don't do much good.
15	I was an electrical contractor and I
16	know that when you make regulations, they need to be
17	specific. You need to have very clear guidelines.
18	And I want to make sure that whatever you consider,
19	that they are clear and not open-ended. We don't
20	want to put a burden on anything.
21	I understand that the oil and gas
22	industry has put in over \$80 million is available for
23	plugging wells. What I think is that the oil and gas
24	industry has put in a lot to New Mexico and to keep
25	the territory clean. It's a beautiful state. But

1	I'm concerned about over-regulating any industry,
2	whether it's oil and gas or whatever. Everything has
3	to be specific.
4	So I ask that you be very careful about
5	the recommendations on this. We need to keep the
6	state clean, but we also need to make sure that we
7	don't hinder our industries, whatever industry,
8	because as we do, we raise the cost of living for all
9	of the citizens of New Mexico. We make the expenses
10	of running and operating a business higher.
11	So as you consider the proposals before
12	you, I would ask that you consider making it very
13	specific and not open-ended, not open to
14	interpretation later. Thank you so much.
15	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you,
16	Mr. Hittle.
17	Gary Park?
18	MR. PARK: Yes.
19	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Hello. Would you
20	spell your first and last name, please.
21	MR. PARK: Gary, G-A-R-Y. Parke, P-A-R-K-E.
22	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Do you swear on her
23	affirm to tell the truth?
24	MR. PARK: I swear to tell the truth.
25	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you. Go ahead.
	Page 9

1	MR. PARK: Good morning, commissioners. I'm
2	happy for this opportunity to speak to you. My name
3	is Gary Park. I was born and raised in Hollywood,
4	California. I'm retired military. I graduated from
5	the University of Oklahoma with a bachelor's degree
6	in computer science.
7	I vacationed in New Mexico a number of
8	times over the years and was thrilled when I got
9	hired by Anderson Consulting in 2000 to program for
10	the state, supporting CYFD. This experience gave me
11	some insight into the quality of education of our
12	youth.
13	So I retired in 2011 from the private
14	sector to follow my passion and become a New Mexico
15	state public school teacher and give back to my
16	community. I was one of the founders of the charter
17	high school master's program located at Santa Fe
18	Community College.
19	Each year, I would become more
20	disappointed in New Mexico public education as the
21	state continued to rank in the bottom 40s of the 50
22	states. Each year, we would hire new promising
23	teachers only to see them leave because they did not
24	make enough money to live in New Mexico or Santa Fe.
25	I saw promising students quit high school, take the

1	GED and go to college as they felt they were wasting
2	their time in public school. I retired from teaching
3	in 2015.
4	So today I'm pleading with you to not
5	add any more regulations to New Mexico oil and gas
6	that will decrease their money they pay to our public
7	education. We desperately need, if anything, to
8	increase and not decrease the moneys we get from oil
9	and gas. Thank you.
10	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you, Mr. Parke.
11	Is there anyone else on the platform who
12	would like to offer public comment during this
13	session? Our next session will be today at 4:00 p.m.
14	If you have called in and would like to
15	raise your hand, you can press star 5. I see Alison
16	Riley has raised her hand.
17	Sheila, can you find Alison Riley?
18	MS. RILEY: Good morning. Can you hear me?
19	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Yes. Would you spell
20	your first and last name for the transcript, please.
21	MS. RILEY: Yes. My first name is Alison,
22	A-L-I-S-O-N. Last name is Riley, R-I-L-E-Y.
23	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Do you swear or
24	affirm to tell the truth?
25	MS. RILEY: Yes.

1	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you. Go ahead.
2	MS. RILEY: Thank you. Good morning. My
3	name is Alison Riley. I'm the vice president of
4	government relations and policy with the New Mexico
5	Chamber of Commerce.
6	The Chamber supports reasonable
7	stewardships of New Mexico's natural resources and
8	the need for operators to meet their reclamation and
9	plugging obligations. However, the proposal to
LO	increase bonding requirements to \$150,000 per
L1	inactive or high risk well is neither balanced nor
L2	practical and carry serious economic consequences.
L3	The rule would disproportionately harm
L4	small and mid-sized producers, who make up the
L5	majority of New Mexico's independent oil and gas
L6	companies. These are responsible operators who
L7	already comply with existing bonding and reclamation
L8	standards.
L9	Requiring individual well bonds at
20	\$150,000 would tie up millions of dollars in
21	nonproductive capital funds that would otherwise go
22	into investing emissions reduction technology. The
23	financial burden would drive production declines,
24	particularly in marginal and low producing wells,
25	many of which are still safely operating and

1	contributing tax revenue to the state. Shuttering
2	those wells would mean lost royalty income for the
3	state, less funding for education, and fewer jobs in
4	rural communities where energy development remains
5	one of the few stable economic drivers.
6	New Mexico already has a comprehensive
7	regulatory framework through the Oil Conservation
8	Division that includes bonding inspection and
9	enforcement mechanisms. The better solution is
LO	targeted reform and improved enforcement.
L1	Finally, this proposal risks making
L2	New Mexico less competitive with neighboring states.
L3	The industry competes regionally for investment and
L4	companies can easily shift drilling programs to
L5	Texas, Oklahoma, where bonding requirements are far
L6	lower. If that happens, New Mexico loses not only
L7	investment, but also the ability to influence best
L8	practice and environmental outcomes.
L9	The Chamber supports accountability. We
20	support responsible bonding. This proposal would do
21	more harm than good, shrinking investment, reducing
22	production and ultimately undermining the very
23	revenue streams that fund environmental restoration,
24	education and infrastructure.
) 5	We urge regulators to work with

1	industry, local governments, and economic development
2	partners to craft a bonding framework that is both
3	realistic and environmentally responsible.
4	Thank you for your time and considering
5	the business community's perspective.
6	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you, Ms. Riley.
7	Is there anyone else on the platform who
8	would like to offer comment at this time? Our next
9	opportunity will be 4:00 p.m.
10	Okay. And I don't believe I see anyone
11	in the room here to offer public comment.
12	So we'll move back to the technical
13	case. Let's see. Mr. Rankin.
14	MR. RANKIN: Good morning, Madam Hearing
15	Officer. Good morning, commissioners.
16	Yes, we have two witnesses today,
17	Ms. Tiffany Wallace, who is with us in person. And
18	then Ms. Kelley Montgomery, who is going to be
19	joining us remotely, as she's abroad in London today.
20	Helping me put on our case for Oxy is my
21	partner from our Denver office, Mr. Aaron Tucker.
22	He'll be handling Ms. Montgomery's presentation and
23	her testimony. And I'll be presenting Ms. Tiffany
24	Wallace.
25	So with that, I ask that Ms. Wallace

1	take the stand, and we'll proceed.
2	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you. So much.
3	Spell your first and last name for the
4	transcript, please?
5	Do you swear or affirm to tell the
6	truth?
7	THE WITNESS: I do. Thank you so much.
8	Go ahead, Mr. Rankin.
9	TIFFANY WALLACE,
10	having first been duly sworn, testified as follows:
11	DIRECT EXAMINATION
12	BY MR. RANKIN:
13	Q. Good morning, Ms. Wallace. Can you please
14	state your name for the record?
15	A. My name is Tiffany Wallace.
16	Q. And by whom are you employed?
17	A. I am employed by Oxy, USA, Incorporated,
18	which we'll call Oxy for short.
19	Q. Are you familiar with the application filed
20	by the applicants in this matter?
21	A. I am.
22	Q. And is a summary of your education and work
23	experience as a petroleum engineer included in your
24	direct testimony?
25	A. Yes, it is.

1	O Tugt at a work high lavel way we got some
1	Q. Just at a very high level, you've got some
2	experience testifying on rulemaking in front of the
3	Commission, right?
4	A. I do.
5	Q. And do you have any changes or
6	clarifications sorry. And your testimony,
7	actually, is attached to Oxy's exhibit packet as
8	Exhibit B, correct?
9	A. Yes.
LO	Q. And you also filed rebuttal testimony, which
L1	we'll get to shortly after that, correct?
L2	A. Yes.
L3	Q. Do you have any changes or clarifications to
L4	your direct testimony?
L 5	A. No.
L6	Q. If you would, just explain to us and the
L7	Commission, what is Oxy's overall position on the
L8	applicant's proposed financial assurance rulemaking
L9	that they're proposing here today?
20	A. Sure. Oxy does not oppose the petition's
21	hope to increase financial assurance for active and
22	inactive wells. However, we do feel there's three
23	areas that go too far with regard to the statute.
24	The first is creating the new category,
25	the new marginal category. The second is in the
	D 16
	Page 16

1	provision with the 15 percent of an operator's
2	portfolio being categorized as marginal, then
3	including non-marginal active wells as part of the
4	bonding requirement. And then the third is the
5	removal of the two-year period for wells in temporary
6	abandonment status, the removal of them outside of the
7	statutory bonding requirement, the blanket bond.
8	And I'm not sick. I just want to say
9	that. I thought it was really smart to get vaccinated
10	right before this. So don't worry. I'm not
11	contagious. I'm just froggy. It's okay. That's for
12	Commissioner Bloom, who's sick at home.
13	Q. Thank you, Ms. Wallace. So among the
14	concerns, there's actually a concern about whether the
15	proposed rules are overbroad or not targeted,
16	generally.
17	A. Yes.
18	Q. Now, I'm going to pull I've got your
19	slide deck up and I'm going to ask you to walk through
20	these slides. And just tell me when you want me to
21	advance.
22	Just give us a general overview here.
23	What concerns does Oxy have with the proposed changes
24	to the first section that's going to be modified,
25	19.15.2.7?

1	A. Yes, and for the Commission's benefit, we
2	tried to do this to be clear and obvious, because
3	there's a lot of material here. So I give you this
4	summary slide up front, in front of every one of these
5	sections, as a kind of the punch line. Sometimes I'll
6	move us just through the slides because I'm going to
7	try to be sensitive to the fact that a lot of this has
8	already been covered, so I will try not to repeat any
9	of it.
LO	So our concerns in this provision in
L1	fact, why don't we just go ahead and move to the next
L2	slide. It'll show us striking both of those
L3	definitions, beneficial purposes and marginal wells.
L4	This is because we don't believe
L5	beneficial purposes is necessary, the definition
L6	beneficial purpose or beneficial use. We believe that
L7	the provision within the petition explains adequately
L8	what the expectation is. We have seen the Division
L9	use these terms in prior rulemakings and not have the
20	need to define. And we would worry that, as we've
21	seen as part of this hearing, that if we don't land
22	the definition right, we could cause more harm than
23	good.
24	And then for marginal well, we've
25	discussed that. And, again, I'm not a lawyer; I've

1	just been part of all these conversations. And Oxy
2	believes that marginal well is that defining that
3	is not in compliance with the statute. So we move to
4	strike that definition.
5	Q. Next section here, where Oxy's gotten
6	proposed modifications to the proposed rule is
7	19.15.5.9. Just give us an overview here of what
8	proposed modifications Oxy's seeking.
9	A. Sure. And you're welcome to move to the
LO	next one. We just strike it, and then I'll explain.
L1	So in this one, the proposal here is to
L2	change the definition of inactive oil from 15 months
L3	to 13 months. I've heard the Division's discussion of
L4	why they feel that we should do that. I think that
L5	really there's no evidence or problem or evidence of
L6	abuse that's been presented for that two-month change.
L7	We just don't feel that it's necessary and we move to
L8	just keep the role as it is. It's a timeline that
L9	industry is used to for its purposes. There are very
20	big decisions to make.
21	And I'm not certain, and I think it was
22	even brought up yesterday, that the 60 days would do
23	anything more or less other than create a big change
24	in process that I'm not sure the evidence has been
25	presented that there's a problem.
- 1	

1	Q. Yeah, I think Mr. Powell testified that in
2	the life of the well, 60 days is not a big impact,
3	correct?
4	A. Yes.
5	Q. Next slide here, tell us what concerns or
6	changes Oxy's proposing to 19.15.8.9?
7	A. Yes, and this is another one where, again,
8	all of this is part of something that you guys can
9	read later.
10	But if we want to go to the next slide,
11	there's a lot going on in this one. If we skip to
12	oh, actually, don't. We broke those out. I'm sorry,
13	guys. Okay. Go back to the summary and I'll walk
14	through it.
15	So really, the intent, as I understand
16	it, in all of our discussions, both as part of the
17	rulemaking and then during this hearing, is to
18	incentivize quicker decisions on risky wells and
19	prevention of risky operators from continuing poor
20	behavior in this state.
21	And so the attempt here was to create
22	this new category, which, again, we would move to
23	strike because of the statute. We think that it can
24	cause some unintended consequences with regard to
25	waste. And I can go a little bit more specific into

1	that.
2	We've heard primary resource recovery
3	being a potential risk. I think also there's economic
4	waste and there's some compounding effects that can
5	happen to mineral or surface owners if operators are
6	forced to drill new wells to recover the same reserves
7	instead of the existing even primary resources, the
8	wells that are already there.
9	And so I think those couple things at
10	risk, along with the legal arguments that I am not an
11	expert to make, are why we oppose the marginal well
12	definition.
13	Q. Okay. Let's go walk through the specific
14	language modifications. So this first section here,
15	Oxy doesn't have any proposed modifications to the
16	Subpart A, correct?
17	A. Correct.
18	Q. Next portion here, walk us through what
19	Oxy's proposed changes are and the justifications for
20	them?
21	A. Yes, so this is the one that I was just
22	discussing. It's the full strike of the marginal well
23	section and the creation of the category for all the
24	reasons. We think if the I guess in short, I'd say
25	marginal wells are not bad. I mean, maybe some could
	Page 21

1	be, but by definition they're not bad. And so we need
2	to be very careful here that we're not overstepping
3	the mark, and that if our intent is to target the
4	riskiest of wells, we have to be very careful here
5	that we're not overstepping and also catching wells
6	that are not bad.
7	And I agree with Mr. Powell, by the way,
8	on the marginal well term. We should probably change
9	it.
10	Q. So one of the concerns the division has, and
11	as you may recall from your time as a regulator, is to
12	prevent the drilling of unnecessary wells. Explain,
13	if you would, just briefly how your concerns about
14	this rule could impact that obligation of the division
15	to prevent the drilling of unnecessary wells. You
16	alluded to it briefly in your introduction.
17	A. Right. So my prior experience is
18	development of full assets, and so I look at that not
19	only from the operations perspective, which you heard
20	very much from Mr. Wrinkle, but I also look at the
21	full resource potential and all of the future
22	potential of the field.
23	And so when we have either additional
24	resources that can be captured or we see a new
25	technology that can capture additional resources,

1	having wells that exist out there that are still
2	testing safely to be able to use is much more economic
3	to catch those resources than it would be to drill all
4	new wells.
5	Q. I think you did touch on this, but I want to
6	make sure it's clear, the concern about unrecovered
7	reserves. So if wells are prematurely plugged, what's
8	the concern there in terms of what reserves that may
9	remain unrecovered?
LO	A. Right, it's waste of resource.
L1	Q. Because it may be too costly to drill a new
L2	well, correct?
L3	A. Correct.
L4	Q. I think further on this slide, Ms. Wallace?
L5	I think we've covered everything.
L6	A. No. I think we're good on this one.
L7	Q. Next slide here, same provision, but further
L8	down, looking at new provision, Subpart E, E and F.
_9	Just explain, if you would, how this relates to or
20	what Oxy's concerns are and proposed modifications
21	here?
22	A. Yes, I'm making sure that I'm on the right
23	one. Okay. So this is the temp abandonment
24	provision. So this is I touched on this at the
25	very beginning. This is the requirement to add

1	additional bonding to approved temporary abandonments
2	in less than two years. And we don't believe that
3	that complies to the statute.
4	I'd also like to point out that when an
5	operator gets these wells approved in a TA status,
6	they go to the Division and they present a case for
7	it. They present casing and cement data. Right?
8	They prove mechanical integrity. And so the Division
9	has to look at these and they have to approve of them.
10	So to me, it doesn't make sense that as
11	soon as they get approved, that they would then be
12	considered risky enough to add additional bonding to
13	them that should be already protected by the statute.
14	Q. And just to be clear, your understanding on
15	how the statute works is that it gives those initial
16	wells that are first put into TA status two years to
17	remain under the blanket bond, correct?
18	A. That's how I understand it.
19	Q. And so because it was just vetted and just
20	reviewed by the Division as being appropriate and
21	protective of against waste and correlative rights,
22	there would be no need to impose \$150,000 one-well
23	financial assurance on those wells, correct?
24	A. Yes. Because if the intent is to target the
25	riskiest of wells and the Division just approved for

1	them to be okay enough to be put in TA status, I think
2	that they're covered by the blanket bond sufficiently.
3	Q. And that's been your understanding, is the
4	statute expressly provides for them to remain under
5	the blanket bond for two years before additional
6	financial assurance would be required.
7	A. Yes.
8	Q. Anything further on this slide? I think
9	that's the only issue that Oxy has raised with this
10	portion of the provisions, correct?
11	A. Correct.
12	Q. Okay. Next slide here addresses the final
13	portion, I think, of this provision of the rule,
14	19.15.8.9, Subpart G. If you would just explain what
15	Oxy's concerns are with the consumer price index, just
16	for clarification of the record.
17	A. Right. So I guess the first concern is that
18	the CPI couldn't apply to the blanket financial
19	assurances if they were already maxed out at the cap
20	250,000, and so you would not be allowed to add more.
21	So our adjustments here were to make
22	that clear, that they only apply to, I'm reading, the
23	inactive wells and the wells in temporary abandonment
24	status for more than two years, just to make that
25	clear.

1	And then the other change that we made
2	is you'll see towards the end, we changed "shall" post
3	on its website to "may" post on its website. And we
4	just felt like we wanted to leave the discretion at
5	OCD to decide when and if the CPI changes were
6	significant enough to make that change, rather than
7	requiring it every year. Because it could be
8	burdensome.
9	Q. Next slide here. What's Oxy's position
LO	regarding the proposed operator registration and
L1	certification requirement?
L2	A. So we support the revisions to ensure that
L3	operators seeking authority are operating properly and
L4	do not have a history of, you know, repeat offenses,
L5	let's call it.
L6	However, we do make some modifications
L7	to the section. Let's go to the next slide. I think
L8	it would be better. So this is where in discussions
L9	with WELC and OCD, we talked through this.
20	Our concern was that it was too broad,
21	the initial language was too broad, and that an
22	operator like Oxy or any, at any given time, could not
23	say for certain at any given second they were in
24	compliance across all states and federal and global.
25	And so we wanted to restrict that, while

1	also keeping the intent to prevent the repeat
2	offenders from coming into New Mexico. And so what we
3	did here is we said we changed who was going to be
4	doing the certifying. I think that will come up a
5	little bit later, too. It was previously officer,
6	director, partner. We're saying "authorized
7	official." Let me be clear on that.
8	And we wanted the discretion to be left
9	with the operator on who they decide could best be
10	held accountable for this certification. For us, I
11	haven't made this decision. Oxy will make this
12	decision. But logically, I would think it's our
13	regulatory director who oversees that business. And
14	we think that was clearer and a more appropriate
15	person that could be held accountable.
16	And then the last section you see that
17	we strike compliance with federal, state and oil and
18	gas law regulations. I touched on this, but I think
19	any operator could stand here and say that we will
20	constantly get notices, state or federal, that will
21	allege a non-compliance that sometimes are not a
22	non-compliance. Sometimes it's a lost in translation
23	on data or something that when you speak and you work
24	it out, it's actually not a non-compliance.
25	And so we thought it was too far of a

1	reach to say that we think striking this makes it
2	clearer.
3	Q. And based on your discussions and
4	negotiations with applicants and with the Division,
5	they've accepted those proposed changes, correct?
6	A. Yes.
7	Q. And we'll address some of this more on
8	surrebuttal. There's a couple of things based on
9	Mr. Powell's testimony I want to clarify, but we'll
10	address that on the surrebuttal.
11	Next slide here also is a 19.15.9.8, and
12	it, again, deals with operator registration. I think
13	you can just touch on this briefly, because I think
14	you mostly covered it already.
15	A. Yeah, it's the same change made here as well
16	for the same reasons.
17	Q. Next slide, slide 14, what's Oxy's position
18	regarding applicants proposed annual 25 percent
19	interest requirements as part of the operator
20	registration process?
21	A. So, we changed this. We believe that the
22	certification at the time of registration and transfer
23	is sufficient if, again, the goal here is to prevent
24	the repeat offenders. If the OCD has the ability to
25	check that on the way in and at various points, we

1	think that annual, I think it's annual, that yes,
2	annual is too burdensome, both for the Division and
3	for anyone in operations.
4	We don't oppose the requirement for
5	annual disclosure, though.
6	Q. I believe this is another instance where
7	applicants in the Division have accepted the proposed
8	modifications by Oxy; is that correct?
9	A. I believe so, yes.
10	Q. Next slide here, slide 15, is 19.15.9.9.
11	This, again, deals with the same area, change of
12	operator provisions, just at a high level. I think
13	it's the same things you've touched on already, but
14	just give us an overview of what Oxy's proposal is and
15	whether applicants and the Division have accepted
16	those changes.
17	A. Yes, the same changes, same reasons.
18	Q. Next slide, 15 here, I think same thing,
19	you're looking at a modification to change who can
20	authorize the certifications or change of operator.
21	Again, this is a situation where the applicant and OCD
22	has agreed with Oxy's proposed modifications, correct?
23	A. Correct.
24	Q. This one is a little bit different. I guess
25	next slide, 17, is a little bit different, if you
	Page 29

1	would. This calls for us to review the proposed
2	modifications here to 19.15.9.9 and each subsection
3	and the justifications for them.
4	A. Yeah, the best I can tell is this is it's
5	a clean-up section, I think I'll call it. I'm not
6	sure why WELC proposed removal of C(2). They're
7	adding
8	Q. I think it's the next slide.
9	A. The next slide shows it, yes. Do you want
10	me to touch on that now or just wait.
11	Q. Yeah, go ahead and touch on it now. I can
12	toggle between them, if that's helpful.
13	A. Yeah, there was we're not sure why the
14	removal of $C(2)$ . There's a section D that you'll see
15	in a minute that was added in, but essentially it's
16	stated just slightly differently.
17	Our proposal would be that we are fine
18	keeping $C(2)$ . We are fine if you want to strike $C(2)$
19	and add D in, but one of them has to be there.
20	Q. So if I slide to the next slide here, 18, I
21	think it's actually E addresses what would otherwise
22	be in $C(2)$ . So your point is either E or $C(2)$ should
23	be included in the new rule, right?
24	A. Correct.
25	Q. Other than that, were there any other
	Page 30

1	modifications that Oxy's proposing I think in C(3)?
2	A. C(3) is just the change that we discussed in
3	the prior slides, same change, same reasons.
4	Q. Nothing further on this slide then, right?
5	A. Nothing further.
6	Q. And the only changes on the subsequent
7	revision is just the renumbering, depending on whether
8	or not the Commission chooses C(2) or not, correct?
9	A. That's correct.
LO	Q. On to the next slide, number 19. This is
L1	the new section, 19.15.25.8. Just give us an overview
L2	of Oxy's proposed modifications and justifications in
L3	this section.
L4	A. Yes. And for this one, let's check the next
L5	slide because I think the change is there. Yes.
L6	Okay.
L7	So this is the time change slide of
L8	the or the provision that talks about changing from
L9	90 days to 30 days for plugging and abandoning wells.
20	We heard some testimony on this this
21	week. I don't disagree with the testimony, but,
22	again, I'd say no evidence was presented that it
23	necessitates moving from 90 days to 30 days. And I'd
24	say if there isn't evidence of a problem or an abuse
25	that the Division's trying to sort, I would say let's
	Page 31

1	just leave it.
2	And then the continuously inactive.
3	I've also heard the testimony on removal and why the
4	suggested removal of that word. I believe it would
5	cause more harm than good to remove "continuously"
6	there. I know what the Division is after, but I also
7	think not defining the well as continuously inactive
8	could be a hazard.
9	Q. Is part of the concern, Ms. Wallace,
LO	regulatory certainty? If you move that language, that
L1	operators and the regulator no longer have certainty
L2	about what exactly that means?
L3	A. Yes.
L4	Q. Anything further on this slide?
L5	A. No.
L6	Q. Next slide here, slide 21, addresses
L7	19.15.25.9. If you would just review Oxy's
L8	modifications here and the justifications for them.
L9	Let me know if you want me to go to the specific
20	modifications.
21	A. Yeah, wait here just for a second.
22	So Oxy supports the perceptions of no
23	beneficial use. We think it was a very unique way to
24	try to target the problem. We did make some minimal
25	suggestions here. And I guess, yeah, go ahead, we can

1 go to the next one. 2 We're really trying to maintain, so no changes to this provision. This would be 19.15.25.9. 3 This is really about preserving the flexibility and 4 the discretion within the OCD. I get a little -- when I was a rule maker, I got leery with not having enough 6 specificity within the rules, and I also didn't want 8 as much specificity. It depended on the problem. 9 And so, in this particular case, I think when we're outlining the specific things that the 10 11 Division is requiring that may not apply to every 12 situation, I would prefer, and Oxy would prefer, to 13 leave the definition in -- or leave the provision in OCD's hands. They can decide which required 14 15 information they need at the time. 16 Q. And just to be clear, I think Oxy had 17 concerns that the way the rule was proposed, it sounded like this information was mandated in every 18 instance, correct? 19 20 A. Correct. And in some cases, the data doesn't make sense for the project or for the wells 2.1 22 set forth. 23 Q. So the language here is intended to make 2.4 clear that rather than mandating the specific information identified, it serves as guidance, and 25

1	that the Division can ask for more or different
2	relevant information, right?
3	A. That's correct.
4	Q. Next slide here addresses another section of
5	19.15.25, here it's section 12. I believe this
6	section deals with the TA status wells.
7	If you would just review and give us an
8	overview of the concerns that Oxy has. I know that
9	Ms. Montgomery is going to be addressing this more
10	directly in her testimony, but just if you would, give
11	us an overview of the modifications and Oxy's concerns
12	and justifications for the proposed modifications.
13	A. So, the petition is wanting to limit how
14	long a well can be held in TA status. And at the
15	moment, they can be granted extensions in five-year
16	increments. And the provision and the rule and the
17	petition would say it would be a five plus two is the
18	limit of that.
19	And so what we'll go into is why we feel
20	like that could be of concern to broader projects.
21	Like, for example, EOR which Ms. Montgomery will talk
22	about in fuller detail. But there are also other I
23	imagine there are other projects that would need these
24	TA status wells for longer than the five plus two.
25	Q. Next slide here I think gets into the

1	details you just reviewed of what's being proposed by
2	Oxy. And again, a little more detail on the
3	justifications.
4	A. So, Oxy wants to retain the Division's
5	authority to request review and to request data that
6	would support the programs that would be chasing these
7	exemptions. And we hope, we hope staying in TA longer
8	than five plus two years.
9	We do also want the discretion, and
10	you'll see struck at the bottom are a bunch of
11	specific data requirements. This is, again, about
12	retaining discretion with the Division to ask for what
13	they want based off the project that's being put in
14	front of them. And so this is really about them
15	retaining the authority to ask for the data and ask
16	for what data is appropriate to approve these.
17	Q. One of the things I wanted to make sure is
18	drawn out, Ms. Wallace, I think the way the proposed
19	rule was drafted, the initial TA status period could
20	be anywhere from one to five years, correct?
21	A. Correct.
22	Q. And so if it were less than five years, the
23	extension as written could only be two years, right?
24	A. Yes.
25	Q. So it could end up being that TA status as
	Page 35

1	proposed would be something less than the eight-year
2	maximum, right? It could be something.
3	A. That is true. That's their discretion.
4	Q. Right. And what's your view of that
5	limitation?
6	A. I think I haven't seen it. I have not been
7	made aware of any problems with that process now. I
8	know and Kelley, Ms. Montgomery, can speak to that
9	more than I can. But we have provided a lot of data
LO	and a lot of sure assurances to the Division to get
L1	those approvals. And I can support the Division
L2	having discretion at that.
L3	Q. So just real quick. On your rationale,
L4	you've got four types of information or guidance that
L5	would allow for the Division to give extensions to the
L6	TA status. In your understanding, is that closely
L7	aligned, not totally aligned with what applicants are
L8	proposing and their testimony, as well? Do you think
L9	we can reach agreement with applicants on some
20	language that would get us to the same place?
21	A. Absolutely. We are doing all of that now as
22	part of our approvals.
23	Q. So we'll work on that going forward. Next
24	slide here is 19.15.25.12. Again, this is another
25	provision that addresses specifically the TA status.

1	Just review the proposed modifications here. I think
2	this, again, touches on what you just discussed at a
3	higher level, specifying that the requested
4	information is not mandated, but it should serve as
5	guidance, correct?
6	A. Right. So this is about there are two
7	things going on in here. One is the high level
8	limitation of the amount of years that it can be in
9	approved status.
10	And again, we believe our specific
11	example that we'll be presenting is an EOR project
12	that has 500-and-some-odd wells that we evaluate
13	constantly. We have made changes to that program as
14	we have gone along. But we changed spacing, you'll
15	hear from Ms. Montgomery, that we dropped wells and
16	plugged them because we changed spacing.
17	As we evaluate those 500 wells and how
18	they best develop those resources, we may have those
19	communications back to the Division for when that
20	program changes. But it takes a very long time to
21	understand how that program is going to work. It's
22	also very sensitive to economics.
23	And then the other thing that's
24	happening in this slide is the striking of well,
25	I'll just call it allowing discretion for the

1	technical case that is asked for by the Division.
2	Q. Anything further on this side, Ms. Wallace?
3	I don't think so.
4	A. No.
5	Q. Next slide here is 19.15.25.12. Again, this
6	touches on the TA status issue. I believe, again,
7	you've touched on this mostly, but I don't think
8	there's much more to discuss on this slide, but I just
9	want to make sure that we've touched everything here.
LO	A. Yes.
L1	Q. And just to be clear, part of Oxy's
L2	justification is that in every case, these TA status
L3	wells have to demonstrate mechanical integrity, right?
L4	A. Absolutely.
L5	Q. And just so I understand, will you explain
L6	for the record, when a well has demonstrated
L7	mechanical integrity, what does that mean at a high
L8	level for the condition of the well? Just so we have
L9	an understanding.
20	A. That it is safe to be out there in the state
21	that it's in and not causing environmental harm.
22	Q. Next slide is slide 28. I guess we're
23	moving into your rebuttal testimony now.
24	Ms. Wallace, in preparation for your
25	rebuttal testimony, did you review the testimony of
	Page 38

1	Division witness, Mr. Justin Wrinkle?
2	A. I did.
3	Q. And what does Mr. Wrinkle say in his
4	testimony about marginal wills?
5	A. He explains that marginal wells have very
6	little value and are mostly being held to hold the
7	lease.
8	Q. And that's the focus of your rebuttal
9	testimony, correct?
LO	A. Yes.
L1	Q. Explain at a high level Oxy's position on
L2	Mr. Wrinkle's testimony in view of the value of
L3	Marshall wells?
L4	A. I think Mr. Wrinkle's view is very accurate
L5	for an ops-centric lens. And I think when you're
L6	looking at a full development field, you look at
L7	marginal you look at any well differently because
L8	it's all part of a program.
L9	Oxy is not in the marginal well
20	business, but we have marginal wells, and they are
21	very important. They play a very important role as
22	part of our program. And so we still value them. We
23	still see the point in time to, be it because of
24	economics, oil pricing, new technology, a rig next
25	door that happens to be there, we see reasons all the
	Page 39

1	time to go out to lower producing wells and, let's
2	just call it, revamp them by any means.
3	Q. Let's go ahead and get into your overview of
4	your rebuttal testimony. I think this kind of
5	summarizes some of those issues, just review what this
6	slide shows and let us hear a bit more about Oxy's
7	concerns. I think you may have already touched on
8	that.
9	A. This is my marginal wells aren't bad case.
10	Q. Next slide here, provide us, if you would,
11	some specific examples or the case studies that you
12	looked at where Oxy has been able to improve
13	operations in production from some of the marginal
14	wells in its portfolio.
15	A. So when I was thinking about the proposal, I
16	was struggling with how to talk about this, because in
17	my mind, they're just inherently not poor wells. And
18	I wanted to be able to show the Commission that.
19	So this is not statistically
20	significant. It's three wells. I went and asked our
21	regulatory team, "Give me three marginal wells that
22	would meet the definition of this and show me where
23	we've done something with them. Give me three
24	different ones, give me a recent one so that they're
25	not too old. And show me how we, Oxy, have turned

1	wells that were previously marginal into non-marginal
2	wells."
3	And so these are three cases that we'll
4	present here. Again, I know it's not the full
5	program. It's not 100 wells. But I'm just presenting
6	the example that potentially the marginal definition
7	as it is now, we could have some waste and unintended
8	consequences if we go too far with that.
9	So if you want to, is it easier to go to
10	the plots? Okay. So this well, the Harroun 9 Number
11	1 well, this is a well that was, again, defined as a
12	marginal prior by the definition of the days and the
13	volume. And then we refracked it. And you'll see the
14	bump in production that is long and sustained. It's
15	not a blip. It's not temporary. We stop it to
16	refrac. Why and when we choose to do that happens for
17	a variety of reasons.
18	Q. Anything further on the Harroun 9 Number 1
19	well?
20	CHAIR CHANG: A quick interruption, if I
21	could. But once that spike if you could go back
22	to that slide real quick.
23	Would it continue to meet the marginal
24	well definition post January of 2020, or February or
25	March, whatever that post spike?

1	THE WITNESS: No. So it's doing the classic
2	hockey stick behavior, right, where it'll decline
3	curve, it'll get a huge spike, and then it'll flatten
4	out. And at the moment, it is not at marginal
5	definition.
6	THE COURT: Okay. So you brought it out of
7	marginal.
8	THE WITNESS: Yes, mm-hmm.
9	BY MR. RANKIN:
10	Q. Yeah. And just to be clear, because it
11	looks like currently it's dipped below the 1,000
12	barrel limit; is that right?
13	A. Yes.
14	Q. But it's producing
15	A. It's producing solid, mm-hmm.
16	Q. More than a hundred days. So it doesn't
17	meet the "and"?
18	A. Right. Which is, again, why the "and"
19	matters. Because I think both of those criteria are
20	important for defining this.
21	Q. Next well, the FNR 35 Fed 3H Well.
22	A. Okay. So this well had a lot of downhole
23	mechanical problems. We did some artificial lift
24	optimization. And you cannot see it on here because
25	of the production lag. This was a recent one. I

1	asked for the one that we did this year, just so we
2	had a current one. And because of the production lag
3	and the public data, that well is not showing.
4	But I have seen the production. I am,
5	you know, out here telling you that that well is still
6	producing now above marginal status and was actually
7	inclining at the time that I looked at it.
8	Q. So again, the lag is about you said
9	you already told us, like, three months; is that
LO	right, between the time you get your proprietary data
L1	and the time it gets in public.
L2	A. Right.
L3	Q. Next well.
L <b>4</b>	A. And then this is the last well that was
L5	another re-complete. I did have a really fun example,
L6	but I decided to stick to the rule of threes where we
L7	actually got fracked in a marginal well and was now a
L8	non-marginal well, which I found interesting. I guess
L9	always the pre-production is nice.
20	But this was another example of a
21	re-completion. Now, a re-completion, just for
22	everyone's benefit, can be that we decided to go
23	maybe this was a completion that we did years ago that
24	had 10 stages and we've decided that 15 is better.
25	Maybe it's one where, for whatever

1	reasons, we needed to skip a few stages and now we can
2	go back and catch them. And so, for again, multitude
3	of reasons why we might have done this, I don't know
4	the specifics on this, but this was a re-complete
5	where we caught extra production by the additional
6	fracks.
7	Q. Ms. Wallace, just give us an overview, if
8	you would, based on your case study evaluation and
9	Oxy's general view towards the use of these wells and
10	its portfolio of Oxy's position on the utility and the
11	importance of marginal wells in its business?
12	A. I think we need to be careful at lassoing
13	too many of the wells into the marginal category and
14	labeling them as holding little value.
15	It is true that sometimes they hold a
16	lease, but that's not always the case. I think just
17	these three examples show production that would have
18	been lost had we been, you know, forced to plug those
19	wells or another operator forced to plug those wells.
20	I think we just need to be careful to say that they
21	hold little value. There are still resources out
22	there. They are also largely part of a bigger program
23	that could have a variety of reasons to develop them
24	later, be it as part of EORs or anything else.
25	Q. Now, is it true, generally, that marginal

1	wells are sensitive to economics, given the nature of
2	these wells?
3	A. Yes.
4	Q. Next slide here, just give us a quick
5	overview of we've heard a lot about Oxy's
6	engagement with both the applicants and the Division.
7	Just give us an overview of some of the efforts and
8	discussions that Oxy's had with those parties and then
9	obviously the places where you weren't able to reach
10	agreement.
11	A. Right. So, no, thank you to the Division
12	and WELC for reaching out to us and having those
13	conversations.
14	Heated legal, fun conversations we had
15	around all of these discussions, all of these topics.
16	But we did come to agreement on 19.15.9.8, operator
17	registration, we've discussed that.
18	And we did come to agreement on
19	19.15.9.9, the change of operator.
20	And then 19.15.25.9, presumption of no
21	beneficial use, which we think is particularly unique
22	and helpful for this, for the intent of this rule.
23	Where we didn't come to agreement, I
24	think we've exhausted it, is the marginal well
25	category and the TAs under the wells and approved TA
	Page 45

1 not being allowed to be captured under the blanket 2. bond. And then the third one is around TA 3 4 status not being allowed past the five plus two years 5 for things like EOR programs. 6 O. Yeah, and that last one it sounds like we're 7 on track to maybe get some language that we can work 8 with? 9 A. Yeah, I think so. We were almost there in our prior discussions. I think what it really came 10 11 down to was how we were going to put language into the 12 rule, like the prior witness that -- I forget his 13 name -- that gave the criteria that we are already 14 doing, how we get that language in there appropriately 15 but not be too restrictive. And then whether or not 16 you have to call out EOR specifically in the role or 17 allow discretion at the Division. We would argue allow discretion at the 18 Division because it's not just EOR projects for the 19 20 I imagine EOR was considered, dare I say, 2.1 speculative in its early years, and now it is not. 22 Right? So I want to be careful that we don't put 23 ourselves in a corner and prevent other projects that

Page 46

could happen on the basis of being too specific in the

2.4

25

rule.

1	Q. And EOR is a broad range of things, right?
2	It's pressure maintenance, it's water flooding, it's
3	CO2, it's a range of things, and I would say Oxy is
4	also looking at some very advanced approaches with
5	horizontal wells, correct?
6	A. Yes.
7	Q. Now we're going to move into a surrebuttal.
8	We have some short surrebuttal in response to some of
9	the testimony that was provided.
10	Ms. Wallace, did you hear Mr. Powell's
11	rebuttal testimony that given the Division's confusion
12	around the proposed rules definition of marginal well
13	requiring both, this is the "marginal well gate" or
14	the "and/or gate," that given the Division's confusion
15	around the proposed rules definition of marginal well
16	requiring both the production limit of 1,000 barrels
17	of oil equivalent and the days producing limit of 180
18	days, that the Division is open to at least was
19	open to simplifying the definition to just a
20	production limit?
21	A. I did hear that.
22	Q. And what's your response to that?
23	A. My response is that I think "and" is
24	important. I think both of those categories are
25	needed to truly determine the risk level of a well.

1	Q. And I think Mr. Powell seems to have
2	modified somewhat his discussion of his rebuttal when
3	he was giving his surrebuttal, that he was sensitive
4	to the need to understand better how operators are
5	managing the well and operating the well based on the
6	number of days, correct?
7	A. Yes.
8	Q. Okay. So you agree with them, that looking
9	at days is important, correct?
LO	A. I do. And I also think it's important
L1	regarding that definition. I'm not sure if we're
L2	going to talk about that, but I think it was
L3	Mr. Purvis who testified that at the current and days
L4	and volume, it would be 51 percent of operators
L5	affected and 2.3, 2.5 percent of the volume affected.
L6	And so if you're only using one of
L7	those, it is not only an accurate description of the
L8	well, but it will also have a broader impact.
L9	Q. And just on that same point, tell me a
20	little bit about what Oxy's view is about having that
21	broad impact. I think we talked about there's two
22	different ways to more narrowly target the impact
23	under that marginal law category. Explain, based on
24	the volumes and based on the percentages, what Oxy's
25	view is on that.

1	A. And we've heard it come up all week. I
2	think that if we're not looking to overshoot, it would
3	be appropriate. The threshold right now or the
4	definition of marginal right now is set at 1,000 BOE,
5	I believe.
6	I think the number has been brought up,
7	and it also came up in Mr. Purvis' testimony, that
8	dropping that to 750 would impact .6 percent of
9	production instead of 2.3 percent, if my memory
10	serves. So it's less impactful. You're likely honing
11	in and more narrow on what that definition of marginal
12	is. I think there are other ways.
13	Q. And the 750 line is also with the LFC
14	proposal, correct?
15	A. Correct.
16	Q. Now, did you also hear Mr. Powell's
17	surrebuttal testimony that the calculation to
18	determine whether an operator's well portfolio is
19	within the 15 percent that puts it into the marginal
20	operator category is measured by wells that meet the
21	definition of marginal well and/or inactive wells or
22	some combination of the two?
23	A. Yes.
24	Q. Your understanding is that that calculation,
25	that determination is made by looking at inactive

1	wells, but excluding wells in TA status, correct?
2	A. That's how I understand it.
3	Q. So your understanding is and do you
4	believe that the rule that's proposed is clear, that
5	it would not include TA status wells in that
6	determination?
7	A. No, because I started to get worried
8	yesterday around the decision, but my reading of it
9	was that TAs were not included. They already have
10	their own category.
11	Q. Okay. Thank you very much.
12	Now, yesterday during his testimony,
13	Mr. Powell was questioned by NMOGA counsel about the
14	registration and change of operator certification
15	provisions that we discussed, and he was asked whether
16	the intent was to require disclosure of not only
17	noncompliance with orders and settlement agreements.
18	Do you recall that testimony?
19	A. I do.
20	Q. And you heard Mr. Powell testify that, you
21	understand that he testified that the intent was to
22	capture only noncompliance, correct?
23	A. Yes.
24	Q. And in looking at the language that was
25	proposed and agreed upon with the Division and the
	Page 50

1	applicants, where the language, I believe, is used is
2	that they're unresolved orders and unresolved
3	settlement agreements, do you believe that that word,
4	"unresolved," is ambiguous or makes the intent less
5	clear and as proposed?
6	A. Yes. Because over the course of this
7	hearing, people have become confused again. And so we
8	clearly didn't land that. But the intent of all those
9	discussions was about the compliance. So if we can
10	somehow sharpen up that language to make that clear
11	that's as appropriate.
12	Q. And also your understanding was that those
13	orders were intended to be final orders, right,
14	non-appealable or final orders?
15	A. Yeah. Yes. The intent was that operators
16	weren't ignoring orders that were given to them. And
17	sometimes what happens is, you're given an order that
18	has a time increment. And so while you're going
L9	through all of that, the idea is not that someone's
20	non-compliant if they're following their order. It's
21	if they're ignoring it, if they're not showing up, if
22	they're not responding, if they're not all of that
23	is what we were after.
24	Q. And this is another area where, based on
25	discussions of testimony, that Oxy is willing to

1	continue to talk with applicants to get a final any
2	final language proposed as part of the final
3	submission to the Commission?
4	A. Absolutely.
5	Q. Now, did you read and hear the rebuttal
6	testimony of applicant's witness Mr. Adam Peltz, where
7	he testified that the definition of marginal well as
8	being proposed is narrower than the federal definition
9	and probably under-inclusive?
10	A. Yes.
11	Q. And I would touch on this briefly, but do
12	you have an opinion about whether the proposed rules
13	focus on marginal wells and marginal operators is
14	under-inclusive, or if it's appropriately narrow and
15	targeted in its approach?
16	A. I do not believe that it's narrow.
17	Q. Explain, if you would, the concerns around
18	the breadth of the impact that that might have on the
19	industry, including Oxy as well.
20	A. So when I look at Oxy alone, and we've seen
21	several different definitions, and I've seen lots of
22	numbers this week surrounding Oxy's impact based on
23	each of those definitions, but I would surmise that
24	our impact would be a couple hundred wells that we
25	have marginal. It would end up being 50, \$60 million

1	bonds.
2	And so when I think about that and I
3	think about Oxy as an operator, I don't think that we
4	hold risky wells or are a risky operator, and so I
5	think that just, Oxy alone, would show that that
6	definition is not narrow enough.
7	And I commented on it earlier, that
8	Mr. Purvis' testimony would say that it would the
9	15 percent would affect 51 percent of the operators.
10	And so then the question is, do we really believe that
11	51 percent of operators are risky in this state?
12	Yeah.
13	Q. And you wouldn't put yourself in that, or
14	Oxy in that category, correct?
15	A. No, I would not.
16	Q. Let's talk a little bit more about the
17	impact to Oxy. Oxy has three different operating
18	entities, correct?
19	A. I believe so.
20	Q. And as you understand it, is the rule clear
21	about how the rule would be applied to companies that
22	have more than one operating entity?
23	A. No. Because, again, yesterday when I
24	started going through the calculations, I started
25	doing the calculations for each entity. I did them as

1	a whole, which was my assumption. And then I started
2	thinking, well, jeez, do I need to do them as each
3	entity. And that would affect us very differently if
4	you're doing each entity versus as a whole.
5	Q. So each of Oxy's operating companies has a
6	different, I'm going to use the acronym OGRID, I can't
7	recall, oil and gas registration, I can't remember
8	what it stands for, but the OGRID number is the
9	operator number, right?
L O	A. Right.
L1	Q. So Oxy has different operating entities,
L2	each with a different OGRID, right?
L3	A. Correct.
L4	Q. And it's possible that the rule may be
L5	applicable to each of those operating entities
L6	separately, not as a whole, correct?
L7	A. Correct. And our well demographic profile
L8	in each of those entities is different. So your
L9	percentage of active versus marginal or total versus
20	marginal would be very different in each of those.
21	Q. Now, just as a sort of analogy here, a
22	similar situation came up, I think, in the methane
23	rule, right, the waste rule? And the Division and our
24	Commission in that case took a different approach.
25	Rather than applying it to each separate entity, they

1	had a sort of umbrella, right?
2	A. Right.
3	Q. Is that something that might be appropriate
4	here, or do you think I mean, we haven't really
5	discussed this, but that's something that may be at
6	least as ambiguous in the way the rule is proposed,
7	correct?
8	A. I would think so from my lens. I would
9	encourage the lawyers to all look at that to make sure
10	that that works. But I would encourage the operator
11	level application of this.
12	Q. Now, just more detail on the you
13	mentioned that, you know, Oxy's looking at potentially
14	50, 60 40, 50, 60 million dollars in financial
15	assurance requirements. And you haven't quite yet
16	studied in detail what the impact would be for each
17	entity, correct?
18	A. No, I briefly looked yesterday, because,
19	again, it was just something that came up to me that
20	said, oh, my goodness, what if this is each entity,
21	that would be very different.
22	And so we're looking at the ballpark
23	range of I think it's 40 to \$60 million in bonds.
24	Q. And one of the entities, I think you and I
25	looked at it, would potentially fall within a would

1	become a marginal operator, right, based on the
2	definition?
3	A. Yes.
4	Q. I think that's Oxy, USA, WTP, LTP, correct?
5	A. I'm going to trust you on that. I'm Oxy
6	only.
7	Q. So in that situation, we looked at it, I
8	think it's about 150 wells or so that are under that
9	entity?
10	A. Yes.
11	Q. And based on that, because that entity then
12	would fall within the at the 15 percent, would fall
13	into the marginal operator category. They'd have to
14	pay \$150,000 for every well that it operates?
15	A. That's correct.
16	Q. And so in that instance, it would be close
17	to \$22 or \$23 million just for that one entity,
18	correct?
19	A. That's correct. And this is where I believe
20	it's overreaching, because they're all active wells,
21	but they are active non-marginal wells that would now
22	have to be bonded because of that 15 percent. And if
23	it were to be applied to each entity.
24	Q. Now, I want to just talk a little bit about
25	your view that Oxy is a prudent operator and this is
	Page 56

1	overreaching, especially as to Oxy, and there's other
2	operators out there similar to Oxy.
3	Tell us, if you would, just how many
4	wells Oxy has recently plugged in in Mexico.
5	A. Over the last five years, we've plugged
6	about 500 wells. It's about 100 a year.
7	Q. Some of those wells that Oxy plugged, would
8	they include what we've heard today or during the
9	hearing as forced plugging wells that were operated by
10	other Division designated operators who were either
11	unwilling or unable to plug their own wells?
12	A. Some of the, yeah.
13	Q. And, you know, in your opinion, does this
14	policy implicit in this proposed rulemaking make sense
15	to effectively burden operators like Oxy, who are
16	prudent operators that plug their wells and the wells
17	of other operators by creating this marginal well
18	category?
19	A. No, it doesn't.
20	Q. Now, just in summation, given that you
21	believe the marginal well provision is over-inclusive
22	and over-broad and unfairly burdens offers like Oxy,
23	in response to Mr. Powell's testimony that he expected
24	industry to propose language back to the Division that
25	would help constrain or limit or more effectively

target this marginal well financial assurance
category, do you have any final recommendations for
the Commission on what the guidance might be for how
to better limit, constrain?
A. Mm-hmm.
Q. Besides to totally I mean, your
preference would be exclude that from that category
altogether, right?
A. Right, yes. So on the record, I'm not a
lawyer, but we do believe the creation of that
category is non-compliant with the statute.
However, if the Commission decides to
adopt it, I agree with Mr. Powell that we need to work
on the language to be a little more narrow.
There are a couple suggestions that have
come up in testimony throughout the week. The one is
to increase the threshold for marginal wells within a
portfolio from 15 percent to 30. I've heard that, I
think that's appropriate.
I think if there's a way not to include
active wells that are non-marginal as part of that
bonding requirement, I think that's appropriate. This
is, again, the provision that says that if you're a
marginal operator, you need to include all your
marginal and your actives as part of the bonding. I

1	think that's not appropriate.
2	So if we were to remove the actives out
3	and keep it to the marginal wells exclusively at
4	30 percent, that could help. I think raising or
5	lowering the BOE definition of marginal wells has come
6	up, from 1,000 to 750. That would be appropriate; it
7	drops the effect from 2.3 percent of the state's
8	production to .6 percent. Hopefully I got that right.
9	And then there was one more that I had.
10	Maybe that was it. There were three. I got them.
11	Q. Just to kind of touch on the effect of
12	reducing the threshold, the production threshold in
13	the marginal category, so for some of the Oxy's
14	entities, I think maybe Oxy, USA, it's got so many
15	wells. Even though it has many marginal wells, it may
16	not hit that threshold for the marginal operator
17	category, right?
18	A. Correct.
19	Q. But nevertheless, it has a lot of marginal
20	wells, and having to pay I think it's got is it
21	several hundred marginal wells? Is that right?
22	A. Correct.
23	Q. And so that would be a substantial financial
24	burden on Oxy, to have to pay the one-well financial
25	assurance for those wells, even though it doesn't kick
	Page 59

1	into the marginal operator status, right?
2	A. Correct.
3	Q. So by reducing it to 750, tell us if that
4	you know, explain to us why that would be important
5	for an operator like Oxy?
6	A. Well, what I and to be fair, I did not
7	run the analysis on dropping from 1,000 to 750, how
8	many wells that would drop for us. But it would
9	definitely drop wells. And so it would mean that the
10	bonding is less.
11	And, again, if the intent is to target
12	risky wells and risky operators, and we can say that
13	Oxy is not a risky operator, and a lot of those wells
14	are not risky, I think that that would be more
15	appropriate.
16	Q. I think that covers everything. Anything
17	else that you wanted to add before I make you
18	available for cross? I think we covered everything,
19	but if not, I want to make sure you have the
20	opportunity to say it.
21	A. No. Thank you everybody and thanks for the
22	hard work and for the discussions. Hopefully we land
23	on an appropriate and good rule.
24	MR. RANKIN: Thank you, Ms. Wallace.
25	Madam Hearing Officer, at this moment, I
	Page 60

1	have no further questions for Ms. Wallace and make
2	her available for cross-examination.
3	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you very much,
4	Mr. Rankin and Ms. Wallace.
5	Ms. Fox or Ms. O'Grady, do you have
6	questions of Ms. Wallace?
7	MS. O'GRADY: We do. Thank you.
8	CROSS-EXAMINATION
9	BY MS. O'GRADY:
10	Q. Good afternoon. I'm Morgan O'Grady. I'm an
11	attorney for the applicants with the Western
12	Environmental Law Center. Thank you so much,
13	Ms. Wallace, for your time.
14	First, I'd like to thank you for your
15	willingness to meet with applicants in the OCD and
16	negotiate the proposed amendments. We really
17	appreciate Oxy coming to the table and we're glad we
18	could reach agreement on certain provisions.
19	I'd like to start with financial
20	assurance for inactive and approved and expired TA
21	wells. And I'd like to share my screen. Sorry, just
22	adjusting so that it's fully visible. I think that
23	should do it.
24	Preliminarily, Oxy does not propose any
25	modification to applicants proposed definition for the

1	terms "expired temporary abandonment" and "expired
2	temporarily abandoned status," I think that should be.
3	Correct?
4	A. Correct.
5	Q. What is that definition?
6	A. Can you read it.
7	Q. Oh, sure.
8	A. Thank you so much.
9	Q. Sure. "Expired temporary abandonment or
10	expired temporary abandonment status means the status
11	of a well that is inactive and has been approved for
12	temporary abandonment status in accordance with a
13	19.15.25.13 NMAC, but that no longer complies with
14	19.15.25.12 NMAC through 19.15.25.14 NMAC."
15	Turning to 19.15.8.9E NMAC, this
16	provision sets forth applicant's proposed amendments
17	for the financial assurance requirements for inactive
18	wells and wells in approved and expired TA, correct?
19	A. Yes.
20	Q. And on the screen are Oxy's proposed
21	modifications, right?
22	A. I think so, yes.
23	Q. And Oxy's proposed deletions are highlighted
24	in green?
25	A. Yes.

1	Q. And Oxy proposes to retain certain language
2	that applicants proposed to delete. Those
3	modifications are highlighted in blue, right?
4	A. Yes.
5	Q. Oxy proposes to remove the words "and
6	expired" from the title of the section, remove the
7	phrase "in approved and expired temporarily abandoned
8	status," and retain language from the existing rule
9	covered by Subsection A of 19.15.8.9 NMAC that have
10	been in temporarily abandoned status for more than two
11	years, correct?
12	A. Yes.
13	Q. So one effect of Oxy's proposed modification
14	is to remove wells in expired temporary abandonment
15	status from being required to post one-well financial
16	assurance of \$150,000, correct?
17	A. Correct. I'm trying to think if they're
18	covered elsewhere, but I believe yes.
19	Q. Okay?
20	A. I believe you're correct.
21	Q. What is the basis of this proposal?
22	A. I think again, I'm trying to make sure
23	that those are not covered elsewhere. I still keep
24	saying we need a flow chart for this. But I think
25	that it is because if they are in expired status, they
	Page 63

1	are either not combined at that time or need to be
2	going through the process for additional approval from
3	the Division, depending on where we go with this rule.
4	And so we thought that they would be
5	either non-compliant and working with the Division on
6	that, or going through the next process around
7	obtaining extension.
8	Q. You would agree that expired TA status is a
9	new status defined in the rules, though, and Oxy
10	didn't propose to amend that definition?
11	A. No, we didn't. It just already has a
12	process in place to handle expired.
13	Q. Okay. You testified that your understanding
14	is that for the first two years, a temporarily
15	abandoned well can remain under the active well
16	blanket bond, correct?
17	A. Yes.
18	Q. And because they've just been approved by
19	the Division, there's no need to put up single-well
20	bonding of 150,000?
21	A. Correct.
22	Q. And you testified that the statute expressly
23	provides for these wells to remain under the blanket
24	bond for two years. Yes. The existing role applies
25	to wells for which an operator is seeking temporary
	Page 64

1	abandonment, correct?
2	A. The existing rule, yes.
3	Q. All right. Give me just a moment while I
4	pull up those rules.
5	A. I'm not going to have to do the rainbow
6	slide. Luckily, no rainbows.
7	Q. So on the screen are the current rules. I
8	see they're very small. Let me attempt to make them
9	larger. Still a little illegible. I think that's as
10	large as I can make them right now.
11	A. That's good.
12	Q. Okay. Thank you. So the existing rule
13	requires higher bonds when a well enters TA status; is
14	that correct, under the current rules on the screen?
15	A. Or more than two years, is what that says.
16	Q. Can you read the highlighted language on the
17	screen?
18	A. Sure. "An operator shall provide financial
19	assurance for wells that are covered by Subsection A
20	of 19.15.8.9 NMAC that have been in temporarily
21	abandoned status for more than two years or for which
22	the operator is seeking approved temporary
23	abandonment."
24	Q. So wells for which an operator is seeking
25	temporarily abandoned status require that higher FA?
	Page 65

1	A. Say that again. I'm sorry.
2	Q. Wells for which an operator is seeking
3	temporarily abandoned status or seeking approved
4	temporary abandonment require that higher FA under the
5	current inactive wells section.
6	A. Yes.
7	Q. Okay. Thank you. And I'm going to pull up
8	the statute. So this is the 70-2-14 NMSA. Can you
9	read the highlighted sections?
LO	A. The first one says, "A blanket plugging
L1	financial assurance for temporary abandoned status
L2	wells which shall be set by rule in amounts greater
L3	than \$50,000."
L4	Q. Great. Thank you. And the second section.
L 5	A. The Oil Conservation Division shall require
L6	a one-well financial assurance on any well that has
L7	been held in temporarily abandoned status for more
L8	than ten years.
L9	Q. Two years.
20	A. Sorry. Two years. Oh, my goodness. The
21	two years. Correction.
22	Q. The statute does not explicitly specify
23	which wells are subject to the \$250,000 cap, correct?
24	MR. RANKIN: Objection. Vague question. I
25	think maybe Ms. O'Grady meant to say \$50,000 cap.
	Page 66

1	MS. O'GRADY: Thank you. Yeah, I
2	understand.
3	BY MS. O'GRADY:
4	Q. I'll read a section. So the statute says,
5	above the first highlighted section, that one of the
6	categories that shall be set in rule in an amount not
7	to exceed \$250,000. That's a blanket plugging
8	financial assurances; is that correct?
9	A. Right. And so the way I define it well,
10	the way I think I define it, I'm not a lawyer, is it
11	has to be more than \$50,000, but can't be greater than
12	\$250,000.
13	Q. Does the section discussing the blanket
14	plugging financial assurance for \$250,000 specify
15	which wells are eligible for that \$250,000 cap?
16	A. It's in that section. It says "temporarily
17	abandoned status wells," in the yellow section.
18	Q. In the yellow section, yeah. So the 50,000
19	specifies temporarily abandoned status, but the
20	250,000 doesn't specify a status?
21	A. No. I think that's specified elsewhere now.
22	Q. Jumping back briefly to the expired
23	temporary abandonment status and the financial
24	assurance that's required, can you point where in the
25	rules expired TA wells are covered for financial

1	assurance? If not, in the section where Oxy's
2	proposed revision strikes through "expired"?
3	A. No, I don't think that I ask that again,
4	because you're talking about the two slides prior,
5	right.
6	Q. Yes. Apologies for jumping back.
7	A. No, it's okay. A lot of words.
8	Q. So here I have up on the screen the section
9	we were just discussing. For this section, Oxy struck
LO	through "and expired," and you stated that you
L1	believed expired TA wells were covered elsewhere.
L2	Can you identify where else in the rules
L3	expired TA wells are covered for purposes of financial
L4	assurance?
L5	A. Right. Okay. So it's not explicitly
L6	stated. But in my mind, there's a process for
L7	handling those, and they were covered prior under the
L8	\$50,000 up to the \$250,000, is how I read that. Your
L9	last one.
20	Q. Okay. Give me just a moment.
21	A. And it doesn't say "expired." I'm just
22	taking that forward.
23	Q. Did the prior version of the rules define
24	expired TA wells?
25	A. No.

1	Q. Okay. Thank you. I'd like to turn to the
2	CPI adjustment provision. Are you familiar with the
3	rebuttal testimony of applicant's witness Mr. Peter
4	Morgan?
5	A. Yes. But you're probably going to have to
6	remind me.
7	Q. No problem. Can do. I'm pulling up his
8	rebuttal testimony.
9	A. Only Purvis' charts stay in my mind, burned
10	forever.
11	Q. Understandable. So this is his rebuttal
12	testimony at Bates stamped 1161 to 62. Can you read
13	this section aloud, and I'll try to make it larger for
14	you.
15	A. No, I can see it. "The \$250,000 cap on the
16	amount of blanket financial assurance for active wells
17	is not relevant to the proposed amendment 19.15.8.9.G
18	NMAC allowing for adjustments to financial assurance
19	amounts because the proposed language expressly
20	excludes blanket financial assurances for active
21	wells. The blanket financial assurance amounts for
22	active wells is set at 19.15.8.9C(2) NMAC. The
23	subsection is excluded from the list of financial
24	assurance categories, subject to the adjustments
25	provided under 19.15.8.9G NMAC. That provision

1	applies only to financial assurance announced provided
2	by subsection $C(1)$ , $D$ , $E$ and $F$ of this section."
3	Q. Would you agree that applicants proposed
4	rule language excludes the 250,000 active well cap
5	from inflationary adjustments?
6	A. Can you point to that language where it says
7	that.
8	Q. Yeah. So in the testimony that you read, he
9	says the blanket financial assurance amount for active
LO	wells is set at 19.15.8.9C(2).
L1	A. But I mean, is that language explicitly in
L2	C(2)? I'm sorry. That's what I'm looking for.
L3	Q. I will pull up $C(2)$ on the screen for you.
L4	A. I was looking to see if I had $C(2)$ .
L5	Q. Sorry for all this bouncing around.
L6	A. No, no, it's okay. Lots of words.
L7	Q. On the screen are the proposed rules and
L8	applicant's Exhibit 1-C. This is the applicant's
L9	Exhibit 1, but I don't think it's different from
20	applicant's Exhibit 72 for the purposes of this
21	provision.
22	Can you read 19.15.8.9C? Oh, C(2).
23	Okay. There you go:
24	A. "A blanket plugging financial assurance in
25	the amount of \$250,000 covering all the wells of the
	Page 70

1	operator subject to Section C of 19.15.8.9 NMAC."
2	Q. So would you agree that C(2) covers the
3	active well \$250,000 cap?
4	A. Yes.
5	Q. Okay. So you would agree that the way the
6	applicants drafted the inflationary adjustment
7	provision, it does exclude the \$250,000 cap from
8	adjustments?
9	A. Yes.
L O	Q. Turning to approved temporary abandonment
L1	renewal, or 25 specifically, Oxy proposes
L 2	modifications to applicants proposed 19.15.25.13
L3	governing the approved temporary abandonment
L4	provisions, correct?
L 5	A. Yes.
L6	Q. I'm going to bring up Oxy's proposed
L 7	modifications. Again, the green highlight represents
L8	Oxy's proposed modifications?
L9	A. Yes.
20	Q. And the blue text highlighted in green
21	represents new language added by Oxy?
22	A. That's correct.
23	Q. In this section, applicants propose an
24	operator may apply to place a well in approved TA for
25	up to five years upon a demonstration that the well
	Page 71

1	has future beneficial use, correct?
2	A. Yes.
3	Q. And they propose that TA status may be
4	renewed once for up to two years upon a similar
5	showing after a public hearing before OCD?
6	A. Yes.
7	Q. Now, I won't go over each and every
8	modification Oxy proposes here, but I want to focus on
9	Oxy's proposed deletion in subsection B of the last
10	sentence, which provides an extended term shall not
11	exceed two additional years, upon which time the
12	operator shall return the well to beneficial use under
13	a plan the Division approves or permanently plug and
14	abandon the well and restore and remediate the
15	location. Do you see that?
16	A. I do. Can you put your cursor on it?
17	There you go. Got it.
18	Q. Okay. And the intent here of Oxy is to
19	remove any time limit on the second renewal of TA
20	status?
21	A. Yes.
22	Q. Under Oxy's proposal, OCD could approve a
23	second renewal for 5, 10, 15 years?
24	A. It could.
25	Q. And there's no limit and no requirement that
	Page 72

1	OCD periodically review a well's TA status?
2	A. Actually, hold on. Let me back up a second.
3	Because the first sentence that you read, I would
4	argue, can they approve at their discretion up to any
5	years, or are they limited to five years, five-year
6	increments? Do you see what I'm saying.
7	Q. I do. I do. I can ask some questions to
8	get it there.
9	A. Okay.
10	Q. So the language from applicants
11	A. Mm-hmm.
12	Q that's crossed out, early on in Section
13	B, there's a section that says prior to the expiration
14	of an approved temporary abandonment, the operator
15	shall. It provides various options, including apply
16	for a new approval to temporarily abandon the well to
17	extend temporary abandonment status pursuant to. Is
18	that correct?
19	A. Yes.
20	Q. And the new approval language is in black.
21	So that's in the current existing form of the rule,
22	correct?
23	A. Okay. I follow.
24	Q. Okay. And the amendments by or the
25	revisions, those revisions by Oxy to applicants
	Page 73

1	proposed language strike through new approval,
2	correct?
3	A. Correct.
4	Q. Would you like to expand on that answer?
5	A. Well, just to be clear, in this section, our
6	edits are really about not objecting to the Division
7	reviewing it or approving. It's more about stopping
8	the allowance of when you can continue to seek their
9	approval.
LO	Q. Would you agree that and I've highlighted
L1	the word "extend" here. That's my edit to Oxy's
L2	language. Would you agree that the current version of
L3	the rule requires the application for a new approval,
L4	and Oxy's amendments allow for the application for an
L5	extension?
L6	A. Yes.
L7	Q. Would an extension bump an operator back to
L8	Subsection A and the processes there?
L9	A. Yes. I think so.
20	Q. Would you agree it's maybe a little less
21	clear if the language is being changed from new
22	approval to extension?
23	A. I do. I do. But I think the language could
24	easily be modified to allow that and just make that
25	clear.

1	Q. Okay. To require that the that a new
2	approval be requested, at which point OCD could
3	determine how many years are appropriate for that
4	subsequent TA period?
5	A. That's correct.
6	Q. Ms. Wallace, are you familiar with
7	applicant's proposal that would allow a well to be
8	inactive for one year before being placed in TA, an
9	initial placement in TA for up to five years upon a
10	showing to OCD future beneficial use, and a second
11	placement in TA for up to two years upon a showing to
12	OCD in a public hearing, and then after those eight
13	years of inactivity, the well must be plugged or put
14	back into beneficial use?
15	A. I think I'm aware of it. I swear we need a
16	flow chart.
17	Q. Definitely, I agree. Are you familiar with
18	Mr and I think you did reference this in your
19	testimony. You're familiar with Mr. Alexander's
20	rebuttal testimony about various factors that could be
21	applied.
22	A. Yes.
23	Q. I'm going to put those up on the screen. I
24	just wrote out what he testified to.
25	So to summarize and to refresh the
	Page 75

1	Commission, Mr. Alexander set forth a number of
2	principles for any such exception, including that they
3	must be limited in scope; limited in time; subject to
4	periodic OCD review; based on sound engineering,
5	technical, economic and administrative information;
6	not subject or not based on guesswork, hunches and
7	speculation or the like; and carefully crafted to
8	avoid any kind of loophole leading to abuse. Correct?
9	A. Yes, I'm familiar.
10	Q. In your opinion, are those reasonable
11	principles upon which to base an exception to the
12	eight-year limitation on a well remaining in TA
13	status?
14	A. Mostly. So it's everything that we're doing
15	now. I think number 5 is a little subjective, right?
16	I don't know how you prove that someone's guessing
17	unless they come in and say, "Hey, I'm guessing at
18	this and I want 500 wells involved," which I don't
19	think anyone is going to do.
20	So I think other than 5 being
21	subjective, the rest of it is everything that we're
22	doing now.
23	Q. Does Oxy have any proposals for how to
24	strike that. All right. I'll move to my last set of
25	questions.

1	Applicant's proposed rules do not
2	require the plugging of marginal wells, correct?
3	A. No, not explicitly.
4	Q. Applicants proposed rules require heightened
5	financial assurance for marginal wells?
6	A. That is correct.
7	Q. And wells may come out of marginal status if
8	they're reworked or otherwise improved to improve
9	production?
10	A. Yes.
11	MS. O'GRADY: I have no further questions.
12	Thank you for your testimony, Ms. Wallace.
13	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you,
14	Ms. O'Grady.
15	Mr. Tremaine, do you have questions of
16	Ms. Wallace?
17	MR. TREMAINE: I do have questions for
18	Ms. Wallace.
19	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: You know what,
20	though? I'm realizing it's time for a break. Is
21	that okay?
22	MR. TREMAINE: That's quite all right. I
23	actually have more questions for Ms. Wallace than I
24	intended. So give me 15, 20 minutes.
25	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Terrific. Let's take
	Page 77

1	15 minutes, come back at ten of 11:00.
2	(Recess held from 10:34 to 10:50 a.m.)
3	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: We are back after a
4	short break. Mr. Rankin, is there anything you'd
5	like to say before we go to Mr. Tremaine?
6	MR. RANKIN: Thank you, Madam Hearing
7	Officer. Just one housekeeping matter. I have not
8	moved the admission of Oxy's exhibit. I could wait
9	to do it. Well, let me just go ahead and do it now.
10	I'd like to move the admission of Oxy's
11	Exhibits A and B into the record, A being Oxy's
12	proposed modifications to the proposed rule, and the
13	B being Ms. Tiffany Wallace's direct testimony. And
14	I'd like to also move into the admission Ms. Tiffany
15	Wallace's rebuttal statement and exhibits as well,
16	which I think are marked as Exhibit B, rebuttal.
17	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you. I'll
18	pause for a moment in the event there are objections.
19	Okay. The exhibits are admitted. Thank
20	you.
21	(Admitted: Oxy USA Exhibits A and B.)
22	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Mr. Tremaine, you
23	said you have questions for Ms. Wallace?
24	MR. TREMAINE: I do. I do.
25	CROSS-EXAMINATION

1	BY MR. TREMAINE:
2	Q. Good morning, Ms. Wallace. Welcome back to
3	OCC Hearings. It's good to see you. I hope you've
4	been well.
5	A. Good to see you, too.
6	Q. So just a clarification on timing. When did
7	Oxy come to the table to discuss with petitioners and
8	OCD thoughts about the revised petition?
9	A. When did we first meet? Oh, I think we
10	started last summer, where there was an initial
11	meeting. And then we met with there was an initial
12	meeting with WELC. And then I think all of our
13	meetings after that were with WELC and the Division.
14	Q. Would you agree that we've made quite a bit
15	of progress in a relatively short period of time in
16	reaching consensus on certain parts of the rule?
17	A. Yes.
18	Q. Thank you. I want to ask you a little bit
19	about operator transactions. Is it normal business
20	practice for oil and gas operators to buy or sell
21	wells and/or facilities?
22	A. Yes.
23	Q. Do you agree that Oxy's various subdivisions
24	have bought or sold wells and/or facilities numerous
25	times throughout their operational history?

1	A. Yes.
2	Q. To the best of your knowledge, does Oxy
3	perform any kind of analysis or risk assessment when
4	buying or selling either wells or facilities?
5	A. Yes.
6	Q. If you're buying a well or facility, you
7	probably want to know if there's any compliance or
8	operational wells there, correct?
9	A. Yes.
LO	Q. If you're selling, does Oxy look at the
L1	buyer to see if they're going to keep up with their
L2	end of the bargain?
L3	A. Yes.
L4	Q. I want to ask you kind of a hypothetical.
L5	And I'm not talking about for the record, I'm not
L6	talking about an Oxy transaction, but just generally
L 7	speaking.
L8	So a predicate question. Does Oxy have
L9	wells I believe you said yes already, but does Oxy
20	have wells that would fall into the currently proposed
21	definition of marginal using "and"?
22	A. Yes.
23	Q. Okay. Let's say, hypothetically, that Oxy
24	wanted to sell 600 of those wells to another operator.
25	In that fact pattern, as a prudent operator, what kind
	Page 80

1	of business and liability concerns might you have on
2	Oxy then with that transaction, selling 600 marginal
3	wells to another operator?
4	A. Okay. So I want to be clear that I don't
5	work in this division at Oxy, so I'm speaking
6	generally about what I know in industry, which I can't
7	imagine Oxy isn't similar.
8	I think there's some legal concerns, and
9	not a lawyer, surrounding if the wells were passed on
10	to an operator that left them the next year, would the
11	turnaround liability end up on Oxy, as a hypothetical
12	example like you're talking. And again, not a lawyer.
13	Q. Understood. If that happened, would you
14	have any, like would that impact your operations
15	and your bottom line potentially? Now you went off.
16	A. Now I went off. Okay.
17	Q. When you just articulated with the concern,
18	you know, if you sell a bunch of marginal wells to
19	another operator and then they just cease operations,
20	the concern is that some of that liability could come
21	back on Oxy, correct?
22	A. It could. And that's also our reputation.
23	We're not that type of operator.
24	Q. So as a prudent operator, do you do any kind
25	of due diligence review of the buyer?

1	A. I would imagine so, but I don't know what
2	that looks like, because I haven't done that part of
3	the business with Oxy. But I would imagine so.
4	Q. Thank you for that clarification. And I
5	don't want you to speak for other divisions.
6	In your prior life, have you performed
7	any version of that kind of analysis?
8	A. Yes.
9	Q. And from the operation standpoint, looking
10	at such a transaction, what would you call that type
11	of analysis?
12	A. Due diligence.
13	Q. Due diligence analysis. Okay. Is a due
14	diligence analysis related to oil and gas well and
14 15	diligence analysis related to oil and gas well and facility transactions, in your professional opinion, a
15	facility transactions, in your professional opinion, a
15 16	facility transactions, in your professional opinion, a prudent business practice?
15 16 17	facility transactions, in your professional opinion, a prudent business practice?  A. Yes.
15 16 17 18	facility transactions, in your professional opinion, a prudent business practice?  A. Yes.  Q. Is it a necessary business practice?
15 16 17 18	facility transactions, in your professional opinion, a prudent business practice?  A. Yes.  Q. Is it a necessary business practice?  A. I suppose that depends on who you are. I
15 16 17 18 19 20	facility transactions, in your professional opinion, a prudent business practice?  A. Yes.  Q. Is it a necessary business practice?  A. I suppose that depends on who you are. I think yes. And anyone I want to work with, yes. But
15 16 17 18 19 20 21	facility transactions, in your professional opinion, a prudent business practice?  A. Yes.  Q. Is it a necessary business practice?  A. I suppose that depends on who you are. I think yes. And anyone I want to work with, yes. But I think it depends on the company.
15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22	facility transactions, in your professional opinion, a prudent business practice?  A. Yes.  Q. Is it a necessary business practice?  A. I suppose that depends on who you are. I think yes. And anyone I want to work with, yes. But I think it depends on the company.  Q. Is it, in your understanding, currently
15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23	facility transactions, in your professional opinion, a prudent business practice?  A. Yes.  Q. Is it a necessary business practice?  A. I suppose that depends on who you are. I think yes. And anyone I want to work with, yes. But I think it depends on the company.  Q. Is it, in your understanding, currently prescribed or required by rule to engage in a due

1	Q. All right. Broader question. In your
2	experience and professional opinion, how widespread of
3	a practice is a due diligence analysis for oil and gas
4	well and facility transactions in the industry at
5	large?
6	A. Oh, I think it's pretty widespread.
7	Q. Okay. Thank you for that. I'm going to
8	move on to some of your other testimony here.
9	I asked you about qualifying marginal
10	wells. But as well as, is it safe to assume that Oxy
11	would have some number of wells that produced less
12	than 90 BOE and less than 90 days in fiscal year 2024?
13	A. Yes. I'm guessing, but probably.
14	Q. As a general matter, wells that follow into
15	that category within Oxy's portfolio, do those wells
16	have downhole mechanical issues?
17	A. Sometimes.
18	Q. Is there any specific reason why such a well
19	cannot produce at least 180 days in a given year?
20	A. Oh, there could probably be a host of
21	reasons. And again, I'm not I don't have any
22	specifics to talk to to Oxy, so I'll speak just
23	broader experience.
24	There can be downhole issues and we're
25	waiting to get a rig out there. There could be

1	maybe we're waiting on purpose because we want to get
2	out there and do a refrac and not just fix the
3	mechanical issues, but also chase some additional
4	reserves.
5	And so we're waiting on purpose for the
6	right rig or the right capital or insertion into the
7	development plan. There's a host of reasons. It
8	might be economics, well price oil price. Sorry.
9	Q. Okay. Thank you.
10	MR. TREMAINE: Madam Hearing Officer, I'd
11	like to share my screen. Looks like I still have
12	permission.
13	BY MR. TREMAINE:
14	Q. All right. So, Ms. Wallace, you referenced
15	several wells in your testimony, I believe it was your
16	rebuttal testimony. The first being the, what I'm
17	going to call the Harroun 9 Number 1.
18	A. Mm-hmm.
19	Q. I think you can see here this is Oxy. We're
20	talking about the same well, correct?
21	A. Correct.
22	Q. Okay. Would you agree that after reviewing
23	the well file here, it's apparent that Oxy ran what
24	I'm going to refer to as a casing patch in this well.
25	That's not on screen. I'm not

1	A. Yeah, I was like yeah, okay.
2	Q. Would you have any reason to disagree that
3	Oxy took a corrective action that we'll refer to as a
4	casing patch on that well?
5	A. I would have no reason to believe otherwise.
6	I mean, if you tell me.
7	Q. If that if that was the case, would that
8	mean there was some form of defect in the well's
9	casing?
10	A. Potentially.
11	Q. In the event that there is a defect in a
12	well's casing, would you agree that OCD rule currently
13	requires operators to fix such casing defects?
14	A. Yes.
15	Q. Okay. So with the assumption that that's
16	what happened here, if you can assume that, would you
17	agree that because Oxy took a required action to
18	correct the casing defect, that the end result is that
19	this would no longer fall into a marginal status as
20	defined by the current petition?
21	A. If that is the way that it happened, then
22	yes. But I don't have the specific knowledge Of how
23	that went down.
24	Q. I understand. Thank you. If you have a
25	well that so I'll refer you to let's go scroll
	Page 85

1	down to production, and we can see what I'm sharing
2	on screen is, and I believe, Ms. Wallace, you're well
3	familiar with us from permitting from your time here.
4	So I've just clicked on the right on production
5	values. And this shows production by year.
6	And so if we scroll down to more recent
7	Recent years on this well, we can see a pretty
8	significant bump in 2022. So we had a down year in
9	2019 and 2020, and then you get significantly more
10	significantly more production after that. Would you
11	agree?
12	A. Yes.
13	Q. Okay. So, in 2019, there were 223 barrels
14	of oil and 43 days of production; there was less than
15	that in 2020. So at that time if you were looking at
16	that production, would you agree that there would be a
17	concern that this well would fit into the currently
18	proposed marginal well status?
19	A. Yes.
20	Q. Okay. But Oxy did something, which I
21	proposed to you what it is, but you don't know about
22	that, but Oxy did something and you significantly
23	increased the production from this well, correct?
24	A. Yes.
25	Q. Okay. If you increase production to this
	Page 86

1	extent I mean, in 2020, we're looking at 18 barrels
2	of oil; in 2021, you're seeing 7,000 barrels of oil.
3	Increased production means increased revenue for Oxy,
4	correct?
5	A. Yes. And the state.
6	Q. And the state. Well, that's my next
7	you're jumping you're getting ahead of me.
8	So increased revenue, increased taxes
9	and increased royalties, right?
10	A. Mm-hmm.
11	Q. I'm trying to avoid the compound questions.
12	But you're right with me.
13	So if Oxy did not perform whatever work
14	that they did in 2020 or 2021, this well would have
15	significantly under-produced its capability. Would
16	you agree with that?
17	A. Yes.
18	Q. Okay. And since this well is producible and
19	you were able to work over the well and increase the
20	production, leaving that production on the table, the
21	alternative that I described, you could argue that
22	that would constitute waste, could you not?
23	A. Yes.
24	Q. Okay. You said you didn't know what Oxy did
25	on this well. But can you articulate, from your

1	operational experience, generally, if you have to
2	perform a casing patch on a well, what kind of range
3	of cost? How much did that cost Oxy?
4	A. Oh, boy. Oh, I couldn't tell you. I
5	especially couldn't tell you now. But I'll tell you,
6	it's less than a new drill.
7	And was this also did I see it's a
8	vertical well? Did I see that in the prior
9	Q. Do you want me to scroll to the top?
10	A. The very first
11	Q. You're going to be more versed in describing
12	that than I am.
13	A. Well, we'll see.
14	Q. Vertical.
15	A. Okay. So it's a vertical well. And I'm
16	just keeping that in the back of my mind, because
17	those are sometimes handled differently, they're
18	older, right, than horizontal for sure.
19	I could not quote you quotes right now
20	on that. What I'd tell you is it's less than a new
21	drill, unless we run into large problems.
22	Q. What kind of problems can you run into?
23	A. All the ones that the Division described
24	when it gave its nasty examples, right? When you're
25	going into a well, it's like especially older

1	wells, it's like working on an old car, you go in to
2	fix one thing and five other things are wrong.
3	Sometimes that happens. You can't
4	predict when that's going to happen. So I would tell
5	you it's less than a new drill unless there are
6	problems.
7	Q. Would you characterize the expense as
8	significant? I'll strike that. I think you've
9	answered the question. I'll move on.
10	All right. I want to ask you about your
11	next example, which is the FNR 35 Federal Number 3H.
12	Do you agree that this is the same well in your
13	example?
14	A. I believe so, yes.
15	Q. Okay. I'm going to, again I love the
16	production tab here. So we're going to go down here
17	and we're going to look at 2021. You had 10,000
18	barrels of oil; 2022, zilch; 2023, again zilch.
19	A. Mm-hmm.
20	Q. And then you saw a return to more
21	production, but not back to its previous levels in
22	2024. Would you generally agree with that or qualify
23	that characterization at all?
24	A. Yes.
25	Q. Okay. So looking at the production history
	Dago 90

1	alone on this well, would you agree that it's accurate
2	to state that it took Oxy a couple years to address
3	the downhole problem on this well?
4	A. Yes.
5	Q. Okay. Do you happen to know whether Oxy
6	reported any of that downhole work to OCD?
7	A. I do not know.
8	Q. Okay. I would just submit if the answer is
9	ultimately no, you might want to look into that.
L O	A. Okay.
L1	Q. Would you agree that would you agree or
L2	understand that OCD looking at this production history
L3	would be concerned that there might be a downhole
L4	problem probably in the 2021 to 2022 range?
L5	A. Maybe. Without looking at all the
L6	production in the wells in the area, I I can
L 7	would assume that our operations people would look at
L8	that, I know. But I can also say that there can be
L9	things going around on, like, did we shut it in for
20	completions next door, did we then have a problem
21	getting it back once it was shut in.
22	There are a host of reasons why wells go
23	down, and I could not say without being part of that
24	team at this time.
25	Q. Okay. It was the tail end of COVID, too,

1	for some of that.
2	A. I was here then.
3	Q. Right?
4	A. I was with the state.
5	Q. All right. Would you agree that if there is
6	a concern about a potential downhole problem, that if
7	OCD were to look at a well file and see nothing
8	related to downhole problems in the well file, it
9	would be more difficult for OCD to review if they'd
10	require additional information to determine whether
11	the well say a presumption of no beneficial use
12	analysis, that would be necessary information for OCD
13	to know? For instance, is Oxy doing a workover?
14	A. Okay. Ask that again.
15	Q. Let me back up. So in 2022, we're looking
16	at zero oil production, 32 MCF of gas, and three days
17	in production?
18	A. Right.
19	Q. We'd agree that in 2022, that would have
20	been a presumption of no beneficial use well?
21	A. Yes. Unless we could prove otherwise.
22	Q. Correct. And that's any gas well.
23	A. We would have had it so that it's shut in on
24	purpose or it has some problem. Right, exactly.
25	Q. So OCD would need to know, when looking at
	Page 91

1	that well, what's going on with it. Is Oxy
2	A. Yes.
3	Q doing an EOR project, are you going for
4	approved TA, are you doing a work over?
5	A. Yes.
6	Q. Okay. And something happened with this well
7	where in 2024, it returned to a level of production
8	where you have 1,975 barrels of oil produced in 2024.
9	Do you agree with that?
10	A. Okay.
11	Q. Would you agree that using the 1,000 BOE
12	and 180-day calculus, that as of 2024, this well would
13	no longer fall into a marginal well category?
14	A. Correct.
15	Q. Okay. Thank you. Do you agree,
16	particularly from your experience, that while working
17	at the Division, that even prudent operators can miss
18	necessary filings?
19	A. Yes.
20	Q. Incomplete well files, increase OCD burden,
21	administrative burden in the event that any kind of
22	analysis or well review is required, correct?
23	A. Yes. I'd say it's probably getting better
24	now that we've gone digital. I hope.
25	Q. Very much agreed. A little bit before my
	Page 92

1	time that there's some vestiges there.
2	Would you agree that in some cases where
3	OCD is looking at well status, in certain specific
4	instances, more general proxies for well statuses or
5	criteria may be necessary rather than requiring OCD to
6	do deep dives into well files?
7	A. I'm not sure I understand what you mean by
8	that.
9	Q. So I asked you just a second ago about, you
10	know, an increased burden if OCD is operating with a
11	delta of information and they have to look at a well
12	and they don't have all the information available, the
13	analysis and information is that makes the analysis
14	for us to be more somewhat more difficult.
14 15	for us to be more somewhat more difficult.  A. Yes.
15	A. Yes.
15 16	A. Yes. Q. Okay. So would you agree that, where
15 16 17	A. Yes.  Q. Okay. So would you agree that, where appropriate, it is helpful to create more simplistic
15 16 17 18	A. Yes.  Q. Okay. So would you agree that, where appropriate, it is helpful to create more simplistic categories of well statuses or criteria, rather than
15 16 17 18	A. Yes.  Q. Okay. So would you agree that, where appropriate, it is helpful to create more simplistic categories of well statuses or criteria, rather than requiring well-by-well deep dives into status and well
15 16 17 18 19 20	A. Yes.  Q. Okay. So would you agree that, where appropriate, it is helpful to create more simplistic categories of well statuses or criteria, rather than requiring well-by-well deep dives into status and well history? Just at a general level?
15 16 17 18 19 20 21	A. Yes.  Q. Okay. So would you agree that, where appropriate, it is helpful to create more simplistic categories of well statuses or criteria, rather than requiring well-by-well deep dives into status and well history? Just at a general level?  A. Yes. You mean like marginal.
15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22	A. Yes.  Q. Okay. So would you agree that, where appropriate, it is helpful to create more simplistic categories of well statuses or criteria, rather than requiring well-by-well deep dives into status and well history? Just at a general level?  A. Yes. You mean like marginal.  Q. Well, that's what I'm implying. The rule
15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23	A. Yes.  Q. Okay. So would you agree that, where appropriate, it is helpful to create more simplistic categories of well statuses or criteria, rather than requiring well-by-well deep dives into status and well history? Just at a general level?  A. Yes. You mean like marginal.  Q. Well, that's what I'm implying. The rule  A. I would say yes, but I would say so long as

1	additional information and analyze, that's a very
2	different story than also now putting a financial
3	burden upon those wells.
4	Q. Agree. And we can agree that those are two
5	different questions, right?
6	A. Yes.
7	Q. There's the question of how does OCD
8	determine at least a threshold matter that a well fits
9	a particular category, and then there's the question
10	of what do you do based on that information; would you
11	agree?
12	A. Well, correct. And even like you were
13	discussing if OCD wanted to call a set of wells a
14	certain category, you call them blue, for all I care,
15	in order to talk about them better within their
16	Division and in order to, let's say, write guidance
17	for what they need to be able to do their analysis for
18	those wells, it's just ease of use, ease of
19	discussion.
20	That is a very different thing than
21	creating a category that has a burden of some sorts,
22	like a financial burden.
23	Q. And did I understand that I mean, from
24	your testimony, Oxy agrees with the presumption of no
25	beneficial use, right?

1	A. Yes.
2	Q. Would a structure that allows operators to
3	respond to marginal well status after a determination,
4	would that alleviate any of Oxy's concerns?
5	A. Maybe. Are you talking in terms of, "Oxy,
6	is this well marginal or not?" You know, you're
7	looking at data. "Oxy, why is this" you know, are
8	you talking like that? "Why is this well marginal?
9	What are you going to do about it."
LO	Q. Sort of. I'm not making a specific proffer.
L1	I'm just kind of examining, like, what the common
L2	ground is here.
L3	So Oxy agrees with the presumption
L <b>4</b>	A. Yes
L5	Q structure
L6	A. Yeah, we do.
L7	Q or
L8	A. We do. We think that's a great way of
L9	trying to target what I think your intent is.
20	Q. If there was a similar presumption structure
21	for marginal wells that both alleviated administrative
22	burden on OCD but allowed operators to respond
23	specifically to marginal well status, would that
24	alleviate Oxy's concerns with the marginal well
25	category and the FA?

1	A. I don't know. So there's a legal aspect to
2	that that I can't probably comment further than I
3	already have because I'm not a lawyer. And I think
4	the other aspect to that is, even if there was like a
5	provision where you could explain the marginal,
6	there's still impacts to production and operators
7	within the state. Unless I'm misunderstanding you.
8	Q. No, I don't think I don't think we're
9	going to hammer out a new provision on the stand. I'm
10	just trying to examine the contours here.
11	A. So that's good, because I feel a lot of
12	pressure.
13	Q. Tell us what language you want.
14	No, I want to move on to your third
15	example, which is the Cedar Canyon 15 Number 2h. Can
16	we agree this is the well that you referenced?
17	A. I believe I believe you.
18	Q. Okay. And once again, I'm going to click on
19	my favorite thing.
20	A. For the Commission, it was called CC15 2H in
21	my slides. So it might look different.
22	Q. Yes, actually that caused me a little bit
23	of trouble finding it.
24	So Cedar Canyon here. But looking at
25	this well, I'm going to click back on production and
	Page 96

1	I'm going to look at these recent years. So just
2	looking at 2020 to 2025, this production, can we agree
3	that this example well never would have fallen in that
4	time period into either the proposed marginal well or
5	the presumption of no beneficial use well categories?
6	A. No, you're right, if this is the same well.
7	Again, my name is different. I can only assume it's
8	this one. I don't know. But you're right, it would
9	not have fallen into marginal.
10	Q. Okay. I want to ask you questions about a
11	different well, that was not one of your examples.
12	And so I'm going to pull up what we'll refer to as the
13	Bradley 13 Federal Number 4Q.
14	When you look at this page in OCD
15	permitting, do you agree that this is a well
16	registered to and operated by Oxy USA, Incorporated?
17	A. Yes.
18	Q. I'm going to go down to, again, sensing a
19	pattern here, production. Let's look at the
20	production values on this well. In particular, look
21	at 2021 through 2024. I would submit that this is
22	showing somewhat of a similar pattern that we've
23	talked about.
24	Looking at this in terms of '24 well,
25	FY24, so that isn't really broken down on here. But

1	in looking across the reporting periods for 2023 and
2	2024, would you agree that Oxy reported 1 MCF of gas
3	and a total of 0.166667 barrel of oil equivalent
4	production for that entire fiscal year?
5	A. That's what it looks like.
6	Q. Well, would you be surprised to hear that
7	between Oxy's two OGRIDs, you have six wells with that
8	same production value?
9	A. I don't know.
10	Q. Well, referring back to this particular
11	well, how would you explain production over that long
12	of a period of time where you'd have a single MCF of
13	gas produced?
14	A. I don't I don't know. I don't know what
15	was going on at the time with these wells or in the
16	field or
17	Q. I'll ask a more specific question. We've
18	heard during the testimony, and I think in both of our
19	experiences, we've talked about this constraint
20	takeaway concept, right, for a gas takeaway? Are you
21	familiar with that concept?
22	A. Yes.
23	Q. Okay. And so would you agree that you have
24	to produce at a certain amount of pressure in order to
25	get into a takeaway line of some sort?
∠ ⊃	Act thich a caveaway time of some soic:

1	A. Most of the times, yes.
2	Q. So if over the course of a year, you produce
3	1 MCF of gas, how is it possible that you get that MCF
4	of gas into takeaway for a midstreamer or processing?
5	MR. RANKIN: Madam Hearing Officer, I'm not
6	sure exactly where this is going. It's a little bit
7	outside the scope of her testimony. And also,
8	Ms. Wallace is not in an operational role at Oxy.
9	She does policy. So she is not up to speed
10	necessarily with the details of how the operation
11	aspects of these wells?
12	I don't want to you know, I want to
13	just protect her a little bit, because she doesn't
14	know the details of these wells and didn't review
15	them prior the hearing. And it is outside the scope
16	of her testimony.
17	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: All right. She did
18	earlier state clearly that she was not on the
19	operation side, Mr. Tremaine.
20	MR. TREMAINE: I'll move on.
21	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you.
22	BY MR. TREMAINE:
23	Q. So, Ms. Wallace, looking at the 2025
24	production data, here, again, we're looking at 267
25	barrels of oil in that first column and 203 days
	Page 99
	rage 99

1	produced. So regardless of what happened at the basis
2	of my earlier questions for you, would you agree that
3	as of this year, this well no longer falls into a
4	marginal well status?
5	A. Yes.
6	Q. So I'm going to stop asking you about
7	specific wells. Thank you very much for that.
8	So as we work through those four
9	different examples of wells, all of which I think were
10	proposed as having concerns of falling into marginal
11	well status at one time or another, we found that in
12	each of those examples, they are not currently going
13	to fall into marginal well status. Would you just
14	agree as a summary?
15	A. Yes.
16	Q. So would you agree that we've provided some
17	really good examples of Oxy being able to bring
18	marginal wells out of marginal status through proper
19	maintenance and workovers?
20	A. Yes. Although I believe at least one of
21	those was a refrac, which I wouldn't say is
22	maintenance.
23	Q. That's a different category. That's not
24	maintenance.
25	A. Right. I mean, sometimes the wells improve
	Page 100

1	because of maintenance or workover. And sometimes
2	they improve because we have chased a different piece
3	of the reservoir, I'd say.
4	Q. That's a very important distinction. Thank
5	you for that.
6	So what I'm getting at, the question I'm
7	trying to ask you, inartfully, is that Oxy expended
8	some resources, performed some sort of work on the
9	well, and took these examples from marginal or very,
10	very low, no production status, up to productive well
11	status?
12	A. Yes.
13	Q. And would you agree that to the extent that
14	Oxy has wells that, as of right now, would fall into,
15	quote, unquote, marginal well status as defined, that
16	under the petition, Oxy would have until 2028 to
17	address those marginal well statuses?
18	A. I believe so, yes.
19	Q. Or alternatively, to provide the necessary
20	financial assurance, assuming the rule is enacted as
21	proposed?
22	A. Yes.
23	Q. So Oxy won't have to foot the bill of any
24	kind for additional FA for at least two years? Do you
25	agree?

1	A. Agree, yes.
2	Q. Okay. Thank you. Moving off of wells.
3	All right. So you spoke earlier a
4	little bit about Oxy's substantial plugging efforts.
5	I believe you indicated it was over 100 wells per
6	year?
7	A. About. It was almost 500 wells across the
8	last five years. So 100 a well, it works out to be
9	or 100 a year.
10	Q. Can we agree that that's a significant
11	expenditure for Oxy?
12	A. Yes.
13	Q. Did Oxy use any of its resources to perform
14	any comprehensive studies looking at impacts of this
15	proposed rule to waste correlative rights production
16	or impacts to OCD plugging costs?
17	A. I would not be aware of that if we did.
18	Q. To your knowledge, has any industry group or
19	independent entity performed such a comprehensive
20	study?
21	A. I wouldn't be able to speak to that.
22	Q. You've been in this industry and operating
23	in New Mexico on kind of both sides of the regulator
24	and operator fence for a while now. How would you
25	characterize the total economic value of the oil and
	Page 102

1	gas industry in New Mexico?
2	A. Significant.
3	Q. Billions?
4	A. Yes.
5	Q. And on an annual basis, would you agree that
6	the value of revenue is in the billions?
7	A. I believe so.
8	Q. During your time at the OCD, what was the
9	Division's total annual operating budget?
10	A. Oh, man. Significantly lower. I'm not
11	going to remember those numbers. It was rough though.
12	Q. Not billions.
13	A. No, not billions.
14	Q. Billions? Okay. What was the total
15	operating budget of Oxy entities for its most recent
16	recording or fiscal year?
17	A. I don't know that either. Maybe I should,
18	but I do not. I'm not on that side of the business.
19	Q. Is it safe to assume this significantly more
20	than OCD's annual operating budget?
21	A. Yes.
22	Q. All right. I'm going to move off of that
23	one now. Thank you. There was some very helpful
24	contours, I hope.
25	So the marginal well definition, I want

1	to break that down with you a little bit. Would you
2	agree that there's let me describe this and see if
3	you agree. I would propose to you that there's kind
4	of three different components here.
5	One, there's the proposed definition for
6	a category of marginal wells.
7	A. Mm-hmm.
8	Q. And then there is the use of that category
9	to disqualify, proposed use of that category, to
10	disqualify single marginal wells from eligibility for
11	blanket FA.
12	A. Yes.
13	Q. Okay. And then there is a third, there is
14	the use of the 15 percent threshold for marginal wells
15	to disqualify portfolios of wells from eligibility for
16	blanket financial assurance. Would you agree that
17	those are kind of three separate, but related things?
18	A. Yes.
19	Q. Okay. And just to clarify, my understanding
20	is that Oxy objects to the second and third components
21	of that, the single-well FA for marginal wells and the
22	use of the 15 percent criteria to disqualify
23	portfolios. Those are your objections, correct?
24	A. Yes. I believe we also object to the
25	definition for the basis of the same reasons. You

	gave three, right, the definition, the use to qualify
2	from blanket and the 15 percent.
3	A. I think all three, for the same reasons, we
4	would object.
5	Q. Well, is the definition of a category of
6	wells within a certain range of production, per se,
7	objectionable independent of the FA considerations?
8	If there's some other hypothetical use for defining
9	marginal wells a particular way for classification
10	purposes, that would not be objectionable, correct?
11	A. It could be based off the thresholds that
12	are there now. Right? So the definition is that
13	so this is going back to the discussion of if it's
14	defined as 1,000 barrels versus 750, which one is
15	truly a marginal, Or let's call it at-risk well.
16	Q. All right. A couple questions about kind of
17	the landing spot here. I have, I think, two more
18	questions for you, Ms. Wallace.
19	If OCD agreed to move the 15 percent
20	portfolio blanket FA disqualifying threshold to 30
21	percent, could Oxy support the proposed structure?
22	A. Probably not within my singular decision to
23	make. But I would say that that is a more reasonable
24	approach.
25	Q. But that 30 percent cut-off for portfolios
	Page 105

1	is better than 15 percent, in your opinion?
2	A. Yes. Because it harnesses, like I said,
3	more of what I think that your intent is. And there's
4	less impact to the state and of course Oxy.
5	Q. If OCD proposed, similarly, to replace the
6	marginal wells in the 15 percent threshold with a 15
7	percent threshold referring to inactive wells or
8	another potential descriptor of non-compliance, could
9	Oxy support the proposed structure?
10	A. Say that one more time.
11	Q. Yes. So I asked you about changing the 15
12	percent cut-off to 30 percent. Now I'm asking you
13	about forget the cut-offs. Let's say you replace a
14	marginal well as the point of concern for a portfolio
15	disqualification, right?
16	A. Right.
17	Q. So we're talking the same structure, but you
18	replace marginal wells with some other descriptor of
19	non-compliance or concern.
20	A. Okay.
21	Q. In that event, could 0xy support the
22	structure of the petition?
23	A. Potentially. I think what we are after here
24	is, again, making sure because we're threading the
25	needle of trying to accomplish what you're after, of
	Page 106

1	reducing the potential impact to the state from risky
2	wells. The thread-the-needle part is defining the
3	risky wells properly.
4	So I think the harness is too you
5	know, the halo is too wide right now. If that is a
6	reasonable way to capture this better, I think then,
7	yes, we could support it.
8	Q. And again, not a proffer. Examining the
9	contours. I have to talk about it.
10	A. Yeah, I know, I know.
11	Q. So I lied, I have one more question for
12	you. Ms. Wallace, in your professional experience,
13	whether working in industry or working at OCD, have
14	you ever observed an oil and gas operator bankruptcy
15	that surprised you?
16	A. That surprised me is the key there. I think
17	when I have observed that, I was largely unaware of
18	the company to begin with. And so neither surprised
19	nor didn't surprise me. It just was, and it was
20	unfortunate.
21	Q. And so the for your response is that you
22	don't know the company's financials, correct?
23	A. Correct.
24	Q. Would you agree that OCD does not have
25	in-depth knowledge of any specific company's

1	financials unless we were to well, I'll stop the
2	question there.
3	Would you agree that as a general
4	matter, OCD does not have in-depth knowledge of any
5	specific oil and gas operator's financial condition?
6	A. That is correct. Unless it's being brought
7	up as part of some ongoing investigation that were to
8	be asked.
9	Q. Right. You were right with me with the
10	second part of my compound question. It's something
11	that we can get if we specifically ask for it, but
12	there has to be a reason
13	A. Right.
14	Q under the existing rules for us to get
15	that information; would you agree?
16	A. That's correct.
17	MR. TREMAINE: I will pass the witness.
18	Thank you for all of your time, Ms. Wallace.
19	THE WITNESS: Thank you, Jesse.
20	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you
21	Mr. Tremaine.
22	Mr. Moore, do you have questions of
23	Ms. Wallace? Mr. Moore, I think I see you on the
24	platform. You may have stepped away.
25	MR. MOORE: My apologies, Madam Hearing
	Page 108

1	Examiner. I was distracted for just a moment.
2	CROSS-EXAMINATION
3	BY MR. MOORE:
4	Q. I do have limited questions for you,
5	Ms. Wallace. To begin, hi, good morning. My name is
6	Richard Moore. I represent the commissioner of public
7	lands and the State Land Office in this proceeding.
8	And we thank you for your testimony here today.
9	I just wanted to ask if you were
LO	familiar with the recommendation of the witness for
L1	the commissioner and State Land Office that the and
L2	I'll share my screen here that the proposed changes
L3	to 19.15.9.8C(5), that the Division may deny
L <b>4</b>	registration as an operator if the applicant is a
L 5	corporation, limited liability company or limited
L6	partnership and is not registered or in good standing
L 7	with the New Mexico Secretary of State. Did that list
L8	include limited liability, limited partnerships?
L9	A. And your question is am I aware of the
20	change.
21	Q. I'm not sure if you have been listening to
22	the testimony so far in this proceeding or if you've
23	seen that written testimony from Ms. Marks.
24	A. I heard Ms. Marks' testimony yesterday, yes.
25	Q. And would you agree that the inclusion of

1	limited liability, limited partnerships would better
2	encompass the company structures included under
3	New Mexico law?
4	A. I don't know that I disagree. I think it's
5	probably more of a legal thing, and I'm not a lawyer.
6	But I don't have any reason to disagree.
7	Q. And I guess just generally, would you agree
8	that it would be better to be more inclusive rather
9	than less inclusive under this section?
10	A. I would agree with that.
11	MR. MOORE: All right. I think those are
12	all the questions that I had. Thank you.
13	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you, Mr. Moore.
14	Ms. Nanasi, are you with us? No.
15	Mr. Maxwell, do you have questions of
16	Ms. Wallace? You have stepped away.
17	Mr. Sayer, do you have questions of
18	Ms. Wallace? All right. He said no.
19	Mr. Suazo, do you have questions of
20	Ms. Wallace?
21	MR. MAXWELL: Your Honor, this is
22	Mr. Maxwell. Can you hear me?
23	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Oh, yes. Hello,
24	Mr. Maxwell.
25	MR. MAXWELL: I have no questions. Just had
	Page 110

1	difficulty unmuting. Thank you.
2	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you.
3	Mr. Suazo.
4	MR. SUAZO: Can I ask that Mr. Cloutier go
5	before NMOGA, and if I have questions thereafter,
6	I'll you know?
7	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Sure. Mr. Cloutier.
8	CROSS-EXAMINATION
9	BY MR. CLOUTIER:
10	Q. Good morning, Ms. Wallace. My name is Drew
11	Cloutier. I represent IPANM in these proceedings.
12	And we met briefly for the first time yesterday.
13	I want to talk primarily, in general,
14	about the three exemplar workovers refracts that you
15	testified to. Those are common activities in the oil
16	and gas industry, correct? They're not limited to
17	Oxy?
18	A. No. One hundred percent common activities.
19	Q. And in response to Mr. Tremaine's
20	questioning and his showing you gaps in production,
21	when you're looking at older wells, there is a time
22	lag between a drop in production and a decision to do
23	something, correct?
24	A. That's true.
25	Q. You've got to think about what it is, what

1	its effect would be, justify the economics to your
2	manager, all sorts of steps like that, correct?
3	A. That's correct.
4	Q. And I want to try and complete the circle,
5	but first of all, you talked about going in and having
6	other Oxy people help you tell the story with these
7	three examples, correct?
8	A. Yes.
9	Q. Because there's not a database in a company
10	even as big as Oxy that you can push a button and say,
11	this is what we do when we do workovers or
12	re-completions or refracts and this is the result,
13	correct?
14	A. That's correct.
15	Q. It's a well-by-well story that you have to
16	tell if your industry is sitting here today, correct?
17	A. That's correct. And we also had to create a
18	new query that fit marginal wells to even be able to
19	pull what wells those could have been.
20	Q. Okay. I want to try and complete, I think,
21	the story you're trying to tell. And please, I do not
22	want to put words in your mouth, but what you're
23	telling the Commission is, if you adopt this
24	rulemaking, there's going to be additional economic
25	

1	going about deciding whether it's going to do any of
2	these activities that you testified about that
3	occurred on these three wells, correct?
4	A. That's correct.
5	Q. And it might change the decision and lead
6	the operator to plug and abandon the well before even
7	experimenting and trying these procedures, correct?
8	A. That's correct.
9	Q. I want to just briefly revisit your
10	testimony with Mr. Rankin about I'm sorry
11	Ms. Morgan [sic], I'm sorry, about Mr. Alexander's six
12	criteria.
13	A. Yes.
14	Q. And you're concerned about the fifth one,
15	which had the words guesswork and speculation in it,
16	because, for example, these three stories that you
17	told here today, there's a certain amount of guesswork
18	and speculation going into whether it's going to work
19	or not, correct?
20	A. Absolutely.
21	Q. We don't have any guarantees in our business
22	that production is going to be restored if we go in
23	and put in a casing patch or a refrac or any of those
24	things, correct?
25	A. Correct.

1	MR. CLOUTIER: All right. I appreciate your
2	time. Thank you for being here, Ms. Wallace.
3	THE WITNESS: Thank you?
4	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you,
5	Mr. Cloutier.
6	Mr. Suazo.
7	MR. SUAZO: Just a few questions.
8	CROSS-EXAMINATION
9	BY MR. SUAZO:
10	Q. Good morning, Ms. Wallace. How are you?
11	A. Good. Probably as tired as everyone in this
12	room.
13	Q. So I just have a few questions based on some
14	of the questions that Mr. Tremaine asked you and based
15	upon the testimony that we've heard this week from
16	applicants and the Division.
17	Is it fair to say that based upon what
18	we've heard last week and this week that the focus of
19	the wells and operators that OCD is concerned about is
20	more narrow than maybe the rules might portend upon a
21	plain reading of those rules?
22	A. I believe so, yes.
23	Q. Okay. And you used to work in the Division,
24	correct?
25	A. I did.

1	Q. And were you part of any rulemakings as part
2	of that role?
3	
	A. I was.
4	Q. Was there a process that was utilized or
5	recommended to maybe hone in on some of the more
6	substantive particulars of rules that was used?
7	A. Yes.
8	Q. Can you tell us more about that?
9	A. I think it depended on the rule. The very
10	big one for which I was involved was the waste rule
11	and venting and flaring rules. And we went through a
12	grueling but effective process over a couple years for
13	that.
14	Q. Okay. And during that time, what occurred?
15	A. Stakeholders of all shapes and sizes met and
16	got in a room and we hammered out concerns and intent
17	around the rules and then tested various factors
18	around that language.
19	Q. Is there anything that you might recommend
20	to the Division and the Commission for how we might
21	kind of bridge the gap on the application of some of
22	these proposed rules?
23	A. I think we should all get in a room together
24	and talk it out, is my general approach to most of
25	these things.

1	MR. SUAZO: Thank you, Ms. Wallace. No
2	further questions?
3	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you.
4	Mr. Rankin, do you have redirect?
5	MR. RANKIN: I do, mch. Thank you.
6	REDIRECT EXAMINATION
7	BY MR. RANKIN:
8	Q. Ms. Wallace, you were asked by Mr. Tremaine
9	a couple questions about how Oxy had gone in and done
10	some of this work to increase production in these
11	marginal wells. Do you recall that line of questions?
12	A. I do.
13	Q. And that, as a result of that effort and
14	that work, Oxy was able to turn around the production
15	of these marginal wells. And then he asked you if
16	that was an effort that would prevent waste?
17	A. Yes.
18	Q. Do you recall that?
19	A. Mm-hmm.
20	Q. But on the question of whether or not and to
21	what extent this rule prevents waste, can you explain
22	whether there are potential or could be potential
23	impacts on economically sensitive wells, which and
24	you testified include marginal wells under this
25	proposed rule?

1	A. Meaning, if they're economically challenged,
2	more further burdens, could their choices be different
3	for them.
4	Q. Yes.
5	A. Yes.
6	Q. Explain your concerns around the proposed
7	rule and how it could impact what you described as
8	economically sensitive wells being these marginal
9	wells.
L O	A. Right. So my concern would be that if,
L1	again, that lasso is too broad with these wells and
L2	the burdens that we put on them, that we could end up
L3	needing to make choices that are premature; be that
L <b>4</b>	plugging the well, be that you know, I'm not sure
L5	what the other choices would be because I'm not sure
L6	if we could even sell them at that point, which
L 7	they're normally pretty marketable. But at that point
L8	I'm not sure anyone else would want to be further
L9	burdened with them as well.
20	Q. Explain, if you would, the concerns that
21	there, that there could be explain, you know, the
22	impact of premature plugging, potentially drilling
23	unnecessary wells, unrecovered reserves. Explain, if
24	you would, just kind of loop those together and
25	explain what the downside risk is to the

1	implementation of this rule as proposed.
2	A. I think it would be waste of resources. It
3	could affect let's say, for example, we plug a well
4	and have to drill another one later. It's waste of
5	capital. It probably affects mineral and surface
6	owner rights because those are probably a different
7	set of people than the original well. Waste of
8	resources for the state revenue.
9	I'm trying to did I answer your
LO	question?
L1	Q. Yeah, that's a category. So there's
L2	potential downsides to the rule, right?
L3	A. Yes.
L4	Q. And Mr. Tremaine pointed out, walking
L5	through the examples of your wells, potential upsides
L6	to the rule, right?
L7	A. Yes. And the point of showing those was to
L8	say that, again, if that if that halo is drawn too
L9	wide and we make choices on these wells, we could make
20	decisions that would affect whatever production is
21	left that we could attain, which is waste.
22	Q. Now explain whether, based on your review of
23	the testimony, whether there's been a showing, in your
24	opinion, in any kind of analysis that evaluates the
25	upsides and downsides of this potential rule and
	Page 118

1	whether there's been any kind of opinion showing that
2	the rule will have an overall upside benefit that will
3	prevent waste.
4	A. That the rule as written will prevent wise.
5	Q. Yeah. Has there been any kind of analysis
6	evaluating potential upsides against the potential
7	downsides to demonstrate that the rule overall will
8	prevent waste?
9	A. No, there's not.
10	Q. And just to be clear, that's the concern
11	about the breadth of the rule, right?
12	A. Yes.
13	Q. Now, on the questions about the specific
14	wells that Mr. Tremaine walked through with you. I
15	guess it is the lesson here explain your concern
16	about the rule. I mean, effectively, it's a
17	case-by-case or well-by-well analysis, right?
18	A. Absolutely.
19	Q. And that's, that's what's difficult about
20	lumping all these wells into one giant category,
21	right? It's a well-by-well analysis?
22	A. That's correct. There's an entire business
23	within Oxy that looks at these wells to try to decide
24	how to handle them for the future well by well.
25	Q. And it could be mechanical, it could be

1	untapped reserves, it could be reservoir issues. It's
2	a whole range of things that go under that assessment,
3	right?
4	A. Correct.
5	Q. And so it's hard to really categorize them
6	into one giant category, effectively?
7	A. Yes.
8	Q. Then Mr. Tremaine asked you whether or not
9	Oxy had expended any resources or time to evaluate
LO	questions of waste, correlative rights or plugging
L1	costs for its part under this rule, correct?
L2	A. Yes.
L3	Q. But Oxy is not the applicant of this
L4	rulemaking, right?
L5	A. No.
L6	Q. And so it wasn't Oxy's burden or job to put
L 7	those numbers together to show, right?
L8	A. No. We just wanted to illustrate the case
L9	and the impact of the rule.
20	MR. RANKIN: No further questions, Madam
21	Hearing Officer.
22	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: All right. Thank
23	you.
24	Commissioner Ampomah, do you have
25	questions of Ms. Wallace?

COMMISSIONER AMPOMAH: Yes, I do.
Wallace, thanks so much for your
testimony today.
And, Mr. Rankin, if it's possible to
bring up the slides. Thank you. And let's start
from slide number 3 if you can. Thank you.
EXAMINATION
BY COMMISSIONER AMPOMAH:
Q. So, Ms. Wallace, you talk about the reason
behind striking down number 7 is that you want the
Division and you added there too to have
flexibility.
So from OCD's point of view, don't you
believe that if the Commission is to strike out the
speculative purposes that still gives OCD the needed
flexibility to implement this definition?
A. I believe that would certainly help, yes.
Q. Now, with regards to the imaginal wells,
number 2, you'll strike that one, too, so there has
been a lot of discussion trying to reach a consensus.
And it sounds to me that probably marginal is probably
going to stay.
Will Oxy support the 750 BOE instead of
the 1,000 and then also still we keep the 180 days as
a compromise?

1	A. Yes. If the marginal well stays in, then we
2	think that's appropriate.
3	Q. Let's go to slide number 5. So you strike
4	out 13 to still keep the 15 months. My question is,
5	what difference does it make to the operator?
6	A. The extra two months are just part of our
7	process now. There's a lot that goes on deciding what
8	to do with these wells. I think it was mentioned lots
9	of approvals, lots of presentations, lots of analysis,
10	both reservoir and economic.
11	And we struck this because we didn't see
12	a reason presented or data presented that the extra
13	two months was a problem. And if it's about
14	collapsing the deadline a little, I believe the
15	beneficial use provision already does that.
16	Q. Thank you. Slide number 6. So are you
17	familiar with EPA's definition of marginal wells?
18	A. Oh, probably in the back of my mind
19	somewhere. But without it here, I probably couldn't
20	speak to specifics. But go ahead.
21	Q. Yeah. So, I wanted to ask you if you
22	compare EPA's definition to the applicant's
23	definition. And even the 750, if we are to replace
24	that, see that as really, really, really extremely
25	good compromise?

1	A. Okay. I see what you're saying. I think
2	that the statement was made in previous testimony that
3	the EPA's definition is more restricting than where we
4	would land. I can't disagree with that I agree with
5	that statement.
6	Our basis for rejecting this here is
7	based off statutory legal language.
8	Q. Slide number 8. So looking at the
9	applicant's description on number D, so Mr. Tremaine
10	discussed this with you a little bit. So if you look
11	at Number 2, beginning I believe it was changed
12	from January to May 1, 2028, an operator shall provide
13	a one-well plugging financial assurance for each
14	marginal well.
15	Do you believe that this provision
16	provides operators enough time, opportunity to rework
17	the affected wells to be moved from marginal wells
18	category to avoid the 150,000 single-well bonding?
19	A. I think having the phase-in, the delay is
20	helpful. It's a material change. Should all of this
21	hold, whether or not I can say that that will work for
22	every operator, I don't know. There's a lot to
23	consider.
24	
<b>4</b>	You know, testimony this week has
25	You know, testimony this week has suggested that operators can go look at their

portfolios and make some decisions and then go out and
work them over and/or plug them. All of that takes
funding. Our budgets for next year, we're already
through that cycle. So we would have had to have
budgeted for the extra plugging and/or extra
workovers, at least for next year, by now.
And so you're talking three years,
you're talking budgeting, as well as the timing of,
you know, regs and everything else that goes with it.
So it's a hard question for me to answer for everyone,
but I do appreciate that a delay was built in of some
sorts.
Q. And so definitely, Oxy and the applicant and
OCD had a discussion on all these provisions. Was
this something that came up?
A. No. Well, we talked about the marginal
wells in general, right? We did not we agreed to
disagree that the marginal well provision should even
exist.
Q. And as you sit here today, Oxy, and I'll ask
the same thing to NMOGA, and then also IPANM, do you
not really have any timeline that they would like this
provision to kick off?
A. I can't answer for everyone else. More time
is better, but I understand, again, you're threading a
-

1	needle here to try to also have impact for the state,
2	for which the purpose of the role is being drafted.
3	If Oxy were delivered this date, we
4	would find a way. Will it be difficult? Absolutely.
5	Are we already down a year on capital budgeting?
6	Absolutely. So we're already you know, that first
7	year, because of the timing of this, I believe most
8	companies' budgets are already settled for next year.
9	Q. Thank you for that. And then also on number
10	3, there has been a discussion. So is Oxy more or
11	less supporting the 30-year at the 30 percent, at
12	least if this provision is still going to stay?
13	A. We think 30 percent is more appropriate.
14	Q. Thank you. So you disagree the marginal
15	well definition in general, but you've talked about
16	riskier wells. Do you have a definition of the
17	riskier wells to the Commission for our consideration?
18	A. I do not. I do agree, though I know the
19	intent of what marginal well was trying to do. I
20	think if we can, you know, reduce some of the
21	parameters or increase, depending, right, increasing
22	percentages and reducing BOEs, I think that that is
23	likely to get better at the true riskier wells than
24	both that aren't.
25	Q. Okay. So let's look at your strikeouts

1	here. Now, there is a consensus on the potential
2	language about the exceptions that we've discussed and
3	the applicant discussed with you using this
4	Mr. Alexander's proposed six points.
5	Now, my first question will be, so you
6	said you do not have any problems with all of them
7	except the number 5. But what about number 6? Well,
8	you're saying that carefully crafted to avoid any kind
9	of loophole leading to abuse.
LO	Any comment on that one?
L1	A. Yeah, I see your point. I think that one
L2	can be a little difficult because I don't think
L3	operators are looking to point out loopholes. And so
L4	it would be almost the Division saying to us, "We feel
L5	like the plan that you proposed would have a loophole
L6	for abuse."
L7	And, again, that's subjective, and
L8	certainly not the intent of Oxy or any operators I
L9	know.
20	Q. So do you believe that at least number 1,
21	limited in scope, number 2, limited in time, number 3,
22	subject to periodic OCD review, and number 4, based on
23	sound engineering, technical, economic, and
24	administrative information, more or less covers what
25	the intention was for number 5 and number 6?

1	A. One hundred percent agree. And I'd say that
2	those are things that we conversations we have now
3	with the Division.
4	Q. Is there any addition that Oxy will add to
5	this, or would Oxy be willing to review this more in
6	detail and then provide some suggestions to the
7	Commission for our consideration?
8	A. I'm definitely willing to review and provide
9	suggestions. And I think as long as some discretion
10	is left to the Division, there could always be
11	something else that could come up for the Division to
12	consider, but that would be on a case-by-case basis.
13	Q. Let's go to slide number 8 number 9.
14	Let's go to number 9. So you highlighted where it was
15	crossed before, and then you want us to keep the two
16	years in there.
17	Was this discussed with the applicant,
18	and can you share with the Commission what what did
19	you guys reach on this one?
20	A. I don't remember. I'm pretty certain we
21	discussed almost everything at some level. On some
22	subjects, we just saw quicker consensus, and so we
23	moved to those subjects. I don't remember if we
24	discussed this one explicitly or not.
25	Q. Then let's go to slide number 10. I want to
	Page 127

1	ask you the same the top one, the two years. What
2	is going to be the impact of this two additional years
3	to the industry?
4	A. Well, I think, if I'm on the right one, it
5	would be that wells okay. This is a legal argument
6	that I think we also covered as part of cross, where
7	it was our belief that additional CPI adjustments, if
8	wells were already maxed out at the blanket bond
9	limit, would not be allowed. If that is not the case
LO	or the intent, then it would be a moot point.
L1	Q. Okay. Yeah, let's go to slide number 12.
L2	So slide number 12, you highlighted your provision on
L3	the changes. So you strike out "is in compliance with
L4	federal and state oil and gas laws and regulations."
L5	So did Oxy discuss this with OCD, and
L6	was there any consensus on this one?
L7	A. Yes, with OCD and WELC. And I believe we
L8	all agreed to this language, although there has been
L9	testimony this week and myself included that a couple
20	of these terms might need some refining.
21	Q. So the lawyers will work on that to provide
22	the Commission with the final ruling?
23	A. Yes, the lawyers will.
24	Q. I appreciate that. Thank you. Let me see
25	if I have more questions?

1	Let's go to slide number 20, and I think
2	I'll be wrapping up pretty soon here. So you strike
3	out the 30 days. And you listen to Mr. Powell's
4	testimony on this. He provided a justification to
5	keep the 30 days because he said for I remember he
6	said that for a well to probably be in a TA status,
7	that be probably 12 months, so you don't really need
8	more time.
9	What is your response to that?
10	A. Oh, I'd say I understand where Mr. Powell
11	was going with that. But I'm not sure that he can
12	decide whether we need more time on a case-by-case
13	basis because he's not as aware of the situations that
14	we're going through with each individual well. I do
15	understand his perspective, though.
16	Q. So number 3, you brought up the
17	continuously. Don't you believe that this will be a
18	loophole for operators, you know, to more or less
19	continuously abuse the provision?
20	A. So I understand the Division's concern.
21	They have testified that they have seen wells just
22	opened up to produce to keep them out of the
23	definition of inactive.
24	I think there are always abusers to any
25	system in life. And are there some people who do

1	that? Probably. The Division would have the data on
2	that.
3	However, I think there's also a catch-22
4	of if you don't say continuously inactive, then
5	there's this regulatory uncertainty for the rest of us
6	who aren't just, you know, putting our wells open for
7	a day or two to defy the definition, and then do Oxy's
8	wells fall in an inactive status because they weren't
9	producing enough.
LO	Q. Now, would that not be in conflict with the
L1	definition of the beneficial use or, let's say, the
L2	marginal well definition?
L3	A. Potentially. Beneficial use has parameters
L <b>4</b>	that are pretty well honed on what a well should
L5	would have to not be doing to have to then justify
L6	beneficial use.
L7	Q. Slide number 25, so you crossed out the
L8	geological evidence, geophysical data and on. You
L9	know, so I do agree with that, but Mr. Powell provided
20	a strong justification as to what he believes this
21	should stay. Do you have any response to that?
22	A. I don't remember exactly what he said on
23	this one, but I think that in general, the Division
24	sometimes the Division likes the explicit statements
25	within a rule so that it's clear to the regulated

1 party what they have to provide without the Division 2 doing more work. 3 I would agree in general. However, given this provision, I think sometimes some of these 4 5 are not applicable. And so we struck it because we felt that the Division could handle on a case by case 6 to say, "What would you like to see for approval of this, " X, Y, Z. 8 9 But I also have discussed with the 10 Division, and they'll love me for this, that they an 11 do -- they can and they do do guidance documents where 12 if they see particular situations are coming up more 13 often, they can then issue a guidance document to say, "In this situation, these are the things we want to 14 15 see." And I think that specificity would be more 16 appropriate there, while still allowing the Division all the discretion it needs in the rule to ask for 17 what it wants. 18 19 Q. So I do have only one or two questions. 20 Only. So let's go to slide number 26. Down on the 21 last sentences, you strike all of them out. And there 22 has been a lot of discussion with OCD and also even the applicant on this. 23 2.4 So if we are to -- where it is stated, "An extended time shall not exceed two additional 25

1	years," with regards to all the exceptions that we've
2	discussed, I was proposing that instead of "shall," we
3	just make it "may not." Would you agree to that?
4	A. I'm sorry, Commissioner. Can you point to
5	exactly where you would suggest the change? Oh, I can
6	see.
7	Q. Yeah, right there.
8	A. Okay. So you would change it to an extended
9	term shall not
10	Q. May not.
11	A may not exceed two additional years upon
12	which time the operator shall.
13	Yes. Now clarifying question. Are you
14	meaning after the first five years is approved?
15	Q. Yes. So here, they're saying that once you
16	get the two-year extension, no more, you're done.
17	A. Mm-hmm.
18	Q. And so you were saying that you want OCD to
19	have some flexibility. And even for your operations,
20	especially with CO2 and enhanced recovery. So in order
21	to more or less give some room here to have wells to
22	more or less progress after the two years, we're
23	suggesting that we put "may not" instead of "shall
24	not."
25	A. Yeah, I see what you're saying there. I
	Page 132

1	think there would probably have to be some language
2	that would explain how that would then work,
3	consistent with those first four points you were
4	talking. Like, you know, "shall" like, let's
5	pretend that Oxy came to the Division with a 15-year
6	program. Is that allowed? Like a 15-year, like wells
7	would be in TA for a 15 years. Do you see what I'm
8	saying?
9	Versus come to the Division and say,
10	we're going to come for a 15-year program and then we
11	have to revisit. Well, as the rule stands, it would
12	not be allowed for some of those wells after seven
13	years.
14	Okay. If we made the change, are we
15	coming to revisit every five years? Are we coming to
16	revisit every two years to check on that program? Or
17	is it just approved as is, unless there's changes?
18	You see, this is where it gets a little
19	bit and why we wanted the discretion to be left in
20	full to the Division.
21	Q. Is this something that, this one, the
22	attorneys can really discuss this and provide some
23	clarity to the Commission on this?
24	A. A hundred percent. I'm signing them up for
25	more work.

1	COMMISSIONER AMPOMAH: Thank you for your
2	testimony. I do not have any further questions.
3	Thank you.
4	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Commissioner Bloom is
5	on the platform. Commissioner Bloom do have
6	questions of Ms. Wallace?
7	COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Yes. Hi. Good
8	morning, everyone. My camera is not working. It
9	tends to it's been going in and out the past few
10	days.
11	But after some questions raised by
12	Mr. Tremaine and some questions from Dr. Ampomah, I
13	do not have any further questions. So, Ms. Wallace,
14	thank you very much for your testimony.
15	THE WITNESS: Thank you. Feel better.
16	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you. Chair
17	Chang, do you have questions?
18	CHAIR CHANG: I was tempted, but I'm going
19	to maintain my streak here and give
20	THE WITNESS: So you're going to break your
21	streak on me?
22	CHAIR CHANG: everybody their hour for
23	lunch, unless you want to assign any more work to
24	your attorneys.
25	THE WITNESS: Well, we're probably working
	Page 134

1	through lunch, so I don't know.
2	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: All right. Yeah, we
3	can still have an hour, even if we leave in a few
4	minutes. So if there's no reason not to excuse
5	Ms. Wallace, why don't we take a lunch hour until
6	1:05.
7	(Lunch Recess from 12:04 to 1:05 p.m.)
8	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Mr. Rankin, are we
9	turning to Ms. Montgomery?
10	Mr. Tucker.
11	MR. TUCKER: Hi. Good afternoon, Madam
12	Hearing Officer. Aaron Tucker, for the record, and
13	I'll be examining Ms. Montgomery.
14	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: And she's on the
15	platform, as I understand it?
16	MR. TUCKER: Yes, she's on the platform.
17	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Sheila, will you give
18	her the permissions, all the permissions.
19	MR. TUCKER: And if I could please get
20	permission to share my screen.
21	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Ms. Montgomery, would
22	you spell your first and last name for the record.
23	THE WITNESS: Yes. It's Kelley Montgomery,
24	K-E-L-L-E-Y, last name, M-O-N-T-G-O-M-E-R-Y.
25	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you. And do

1	swear or affirm to tell the truth?
2	THE WITNESS: I do.
3	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you.
4	Go ahead Mr. Tucker.
5	MR. TUCKER: Thank you very much.
6	KELLEY MONTGOMERY,
7	having first been duly sworn, testified as follows:
8	DIRECT EXAMINATION
9	BY MR. TUCKER:
10	Q. Ms. Montgomery, could you please state your
11	name and your role at Oxy.
12	A. Sure. It's Kelley Montgomery. I'm employed
13	in Houston, Texas. My current responsibilities are
14	I'm the vice president of our air programs, but I
15	spent the last 10 years as our regulatory director in
16	the Permian.
17	Q. Thank you. Could you please describe your
18	educational background and professional
19	qualifications.
20	A. Sure. I have a BS in mechanical engineering
21	and am a registered professional engineer in Texas. I
22	have been with Oxy for 34 years, and in that time,
23	I've been a production engineer and environmental
24	engineer. And then the latest has been regulatory
25	director.

Τ	Q. Is Oxy Exhibit C a copy of your testimony?
2	A. Yes, it is.
3	Q. Do you have any changes or clarifications to
4	your testimony?
5	A. No, I do not.
6	Q. Let's go to slide 2. Could you please give
7	us an overview of the current framework for temporary
8	abandoned status?
9	A. Sure. The existing rules for temporary
10	abandoned status are really in three bullets, as you
11	can see here. We have 19.15.25.12, and that's where
12	the rules give the OCD authority to place wells in
13	temporarily abandonment status, and I may say TA
14	status as we go on so I don't get tongue-tied, for up
15	to five years.
16	And, they also provide discretion to the
17	Division to extend the status for good cause shown.
18	Also in that portion of the regulation, they limit the
19	number of TA'd wells an operator can have, depending
20	on the size of the operator and number of wells they
21	have.
22	Second bullet or second portion of the
23	regulation is 19.15.25.13, and this talks about the
24	evidence that an operator needs to submit on the
25	casing and cementing, et cetera, when seeking approval
	Page 137

1	for TA status.
2	And finally, we get to 19.15.25.14, and
3	this identifies the mechanical integrity that we must
4	perform in order to seek approval for temporary
5	abandonment status.
6	Q. Thank you. And are you aware of any
7	deficiencies with the existing process for temporary
8	abandoned status?
9	A. No, I'm not.
LO	Q. Let's go on to slide 3. What concerns does
L1	Oxy have about WELC's proposed limitations on
L2	extensions for temporary abandonment?
L3	A. Sure. So first, I'll just orient you a
L4	little bit. These slides are very similar to
L5	Ms. Wallace's. You have the WELC proposal on the left
L6	in red. You have Oxy's modification that's shown in
L7	kind of the green highlights, and then kind of the
L8	rationale for the reason. So I'll pretty much focus
L9	on the rationale.
20	What we're proposing is to eliminate
21	portions of the WELC proposal, of the additions here
22	in Subsection B, that limit the authority of the
23	Division to extend the temporary abandonment status to
24	longer than two years.
25	So we believe the Division should retain

1	full discretion on the length of time that a well may
2	be eligible for TA. And there's a couple of reasons
3	for that. We are very heavily involved in enhanced
4	oil recovery projects. We've been very successful
5	with these projects. And these projects definitely
6	benefit from an inventory of TA wells, which we'll go
7	into a little bit later.
8	Well, actually, I'll talk about it now
9	and I'll show a graph of it later. We have some
L O	examples in our Hobbs unit where 49 wells that were
L1	TA'd were converted to either production or injection.
L2	And they have had amazing results.
L3	When you convert these wells, they can
L4	take a long time. And there's a variety of factors
L5	for that. We have you can get the economics,
L6	you've got the regulatory hurdles to get you all your
L7	approvals for your injection, you've got
L8	infrastructure concerns and timelines, and then just
L9	the general technology.
20	Q. I'd like to stay on this slide for just a
21	little bit longer. WELC proposes to require that
22	extensions be subject to the adjudicatory proceedings
23	in 19.15.4. Oxy is opposed to that change, correct?
24	A. Correct.
25	Q. And can you explain, provide an explanation

1	for why Oxy has concerns with requiring a hearing for
2	extension requests?
3	A. Yes. I think it's logistically impractical.
4	When you are looking at an extension request, you have
5	a very the timing that it takes to get on the
6	docket, to put it together, and to get an actual
7	order, I worry about our compliance from a Division
8	standpoint and from an operator standpoint, that
9	timeframe it takes to get to that point.
10	Q. Thank you. Let's go to slide 4. What
11	concerns does Oxy have about WELC-proposed eligibility
12	restrictions for temporary abandoned status?
13	A. Yes. So, Oxy, we propose to eliminate a
14	portion of the proposed additions in Subsection C.
15	And this section right here that they've added limits
16	the eligibility of wells to be a TA status to only
17	those that have been inactive for less than three
18	years.
19	We believe the Division should retain
20	full discretion, as I said earlier, over the wells
21	which are eligible for TA status. EOR projects,
22	enhanced oil recovery projects, they frequently
23	benefit from an inventory of TA wells. And many of
24	these wells will have been inactive for three years or
25	more. And if we allow wells that can pass and do pass

1	mechanical integrity testing to be granted TA status,
2	it won't only assist in continued help with our
3	enhanced recovery, but also it prevents operators from
4	having to prematurely plug wells or, in Oxy's case,
5	having to drill new wells for our EOR projects.
6	Q. Let's talk a little bit more about enhanced
7	oil recovery. I'm going to move to slide 5. How are
8	wells in temporary abandoned status utilized in
9	enhanced recovery projects?
LO	A. So, I can give you some examples of how I've
L1	seen it used. And when I take like the South Hobbs
L2	unit in particular, when it was on primary and water
L3	flood, we were on 40-acre spacing, then we went to
L4	I mean, excuse me yeah, 40-acre spacing. Then we
L5	went to 80-acre spacing at the initial.
L6	And then over time, we come back and
L7	reworked these wells to target different zones, to, I
L8	mean, manipulate the flood, to work with how to
L9	understand how the flood is going. So, we've used
20	these to turn on and off different portions of the
21	field.
22	I've even seen projects that I've worked
23	on in my past that go down to 10-acre spacing. It
24	just, it varies as you're working the flood to try to
25	make the best of your enhanced oil recovery project.

1	Q. And what are the timelines for developing
2	enhanced oil recovery projects?
3	A. Oh, gosh. So they can take many years. I
4	can say just, in particular, the South Hobbs that I
5	was involved in, we went to hearing in 2012, 2013, and
6	didn't end up actually putting the starting the
7	flood until maybe around 2014, 2015.
8	And the logistics of that are your
9	regulatory approvals and then, of course, your
LO	infrastructure changes. There's a lot of
L1	infrastructure changes that are associated with these
L2	type of projects.
L3	Q. Thank you. Moving on to slide 6, what
L4	safeguards exist for wells in temporary abandonment
L5	status?
L6	A. Well, we're not proposing to change any of
L7	the existing rules that provide the safeguards. You
L8	have your mechanical integrity test that these wells
L9	have to demonstrate to show that they do no harm and
20	they have in casing integrity.
21	All we are asking really here is for the
22	Division to have discretion to tailor the timeframe
23	for a temporarily abandoned well to the conditions of
24	a particular circumstance, a particular operator, a
25	particular well.

1	Q. Thank you. I'm going to move to
2	Ms. Montgomery's rebuttal testimony. Ms. Montgomery,
3	what is Oxy's response to WELC's proposed time limits
4	for temporary abandonment?
5	A. Well, the proposed timeline would give
6	operators a maximum of seven years to either return
7	the wells to beneficial use or to permanently plug the
8	well and restore and remediate the location.
9	This whole timeframe is just premised on
10	the idea that wells in TA status for longer than seven
11	years don't have a beneficial use. But we can
12	demonstrate that hasn't been the case for Oxy.
13	Q. And can you provide us some specific
14	examples showing the value of wells and temporary
15	abandonment for more than eight years?
16	A. Yes. Do we want yeah. There we go.
17	That froze up for a second. Can you still hear me.
18	Q. Yes, we can hear you. Thank you.
19	A. OK, I apologize. I'm on wifi.
20	So let me orient you to this graph here.
21	On the bottom is time, and time goes from the 2000s
22	all the way to present day in 2025.
23	What you see on the left is your oil
24	production in barrels per day. And that's represented
25	by the green line.

1	And then on your right, you're going to
2	have gas production in MCF per day, and that's
3	represented by the red line.
4	So what we did here is we looked in our
5	Hobbs unit that is in New Mexico and I'm most familiar
6	with. And we took 49 wells. And these are wells that
7	have been in temporarily abandoned status for varying
8	lengths of time. And in the last ten years, you can
9	see very clearly when we started bringing wells back
10	on, either to production or injection during that
11	time. And so you see you go from a very flat or
12	declining oil to double, triple, quadruple, and more
13	the oil production by bringing those wells back
14	online.
15	Q. In this graph, do you know how many of the
16	wells were in temporary abandoned status for more than
17	eight years?
18	A. Yes. So we have 45 percent of those wells,
19	almost half, had been in TA status for more than eight
20	years, and 21 have been in TA status for more than ten
21	years.
22	Q. What would have been the consequences if
23	WELC's proposed rule had been in place for these
24	wells?
25	A. These wells would have been plugged and
	Page 144

1	abandoned, we would have lost the assets and we would
2	have had waste because we would probably not have
3	produced these wells. We would have had to drill new
4	wells, and that's a whole economic decision, whether
5	you're going to drill those wells or not.
6	So there would have definitely been some
7	waste or the expenditure to drill new wells to get
8	this production.
9	Q. What does this data demonstrate about the
10	time limits and value of Division discretion?
11	A. So it's critical, I think, that we utilize
12	the strengths of the Division to be able to have
13	discretion over TA status of wells. If a well is
14	properly TA, it demonstrates mechanical integrity and
15	it has beneficial use, and we can demonstrate that we
16	have a timeline, that we have a proper use for these,
17	that they're not at risk for being orphaned, if you
18	will, then I think that we should allow the Division
19	to have that discretion.
20	Q. In your opinion, how would WELC's proposed
21	rule result in waste?
22	A. Well, for one, we would be plugging a lot of
23	these wells, so then we would have to make a decision
24	whether it was economic or the timeline to drill a new
25	well. It may not be in some cases, so you would have

1	waste. You wouldn't recover the resources that you
2	can recover in an enhanced oil recovery project.
3	Q. And just to summarize for the commissioners,
4	what is your recommendation?
5	A. My recommendation is that we allow the
6	Division to have discretion over temporarily abandoned
7	time limits. The current way that it's being handled,
8	that an operator proposes and provides the information
9	that's relevant to this, that the Division needs to
10	make a decision, and we continue with the current
11	process. I believe it has worked well.
12	MR. TUCKER: Thank you, Ms. Montgomery.
13	I'd like to move to admit Exhibit C of
14	Ms. Montgomery's direct and rebuttal testimony as
15	exhibits.
16	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: I'll pause for a
17	moment in the event there are any objections.
18	Exhibit C is admitted.
19	(Admitted: Oxy USA Exhibit C.)
20	MR. TREMAINE: Thank you. We'll pass the
21	witness.
22	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you.
23	Ms. Fox or Ms. O'Grady?
24	MS. O'GRADY: Yes, thank you so much. Just
25	a short set of questions.

1	CROSS-EXAMINATION
2	BY MS. O'GRADY:
3	Q. Good afternoon, Ms. Montgomery. My name is
4	Morgan O'Grady. I'm an attorney with the Western
5	Environmental Law Center for applicants. And I am
6	going to pull up a slide in just a moment.
7	Ms. Montgomery, are you familiar with
8	applicant's expert Tom Alexander's testimony?
9	A. I was not able to listen to his testimony,
10	no.
11	Q. Okay. So you're not familiar with the graph
12	before us on the screen?
13	A. I've never seen it before.
14	Q. This graph shows data demonstrating that
15	wells on average across all operators in New Mexico
16	within a certain range of time, that's identified at
17	the bottom of the page, it shows that wells on average
18	tend to not come back into production after a certain
19	amount of time.
20	And my question to you is, do you have
21	any data and specifically, do you see on the screen
22	that 99.5 of the sample reactivations occurred within
23	eight years?
24	A. I mean, I see it written. Well, I don't see
25	99. I think I see 90 plus percent on this

1	particular are you asking me if I can see oh,
2	99, there you go, 99 percent of the sample thank
3	you for that, occurred within eight years. Okay.
4	Q. And do you agree that the seven years plus
5	one year of inactivity come out to eight years of time
6	in the proposed rules that a well can remain inactive?
7	A. In the proposed rules, yes.
8	Q. Does Oxy have any data that you have
9	presented testimony on, various wells of Oxy's that
10	have come back into production after much longer
11	periods of time in association with, for example, EOR
12	projects? Do you have any data on Oxy's reactivations
13	over time?
14	A. Other than what I just presented.
15	Q. Yes.
16	A. No, not other than what I just presented.
17	Q. Do you have any reason to dispute that this
18	data is representative of reactivations across all
19	wells in New Mexico and all operators?
20	A. No. I have no idea where the data came
21	from, so I have no basis for that. I could just tell
22	you where Oxy about our data.
23	MS. O'GRADY: I understand. Okay. I'll
24	conclude my questions there. Thank you so much,
25	Ms. Montgomery.

1	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you.
2	Mr. Tremaine or Mr. Hall.
3	MR. HALL: Thank you, Madam Hearing Officer.
4	Just a couple questions.
5	CROSS-EXAMINATION
6	BY MR. HALL:
7	Q. Hi, Ms. Montgomery. My name is Michael
8	Hall. I'm an attorney with the Oil Conservation
9	Division. Nice to meet you.
10	A. Nice to meet you, too.
11	Q. Now, I have a couple questions specifically
12	about Oxy. Are you aware whether Oxy had an excess of
13	100 wells that produce less than 90 barrels of oil
14	equivalent in fiscal year 2024?
15	A. I think I heard that when you were talking
16	with Ms. Wallace earlier, but that would be my only
17	knowledge of that.
18	Q. Do you have any reason to dispute that?
19	A. No, I don't. I just don't have the data in
20	front of me. No.
21	Q. Are you aware of significant downhole
22	mechanical reasons why Oxy would have so many wells
23	Oproducing so little petroleum?
24	A. Well, you know, if you looked at the slide
25	that I showed earlier, the early you know, we had

1	some wells in Hobbs that were very, very low
2	producing. I don't know how low. I mean, pretty low.
3	And once we started enhanced oil recovery, they just
4	took off.
5	So there was definitely value in those
6	wells that had very low production that were part of
7	an enhanced oil recovery project.
8	Q. And so, with those wells in particular,
9	would you assume that there were not downhole
10	mechanical issues, since the project was so
11	successful?
12	A. Or they were fixed. Yes, I don't know of
13	any downhole mechanical issues with them.
14	Q. If there are no mechanical issues in these
15	wells that I've asked you about earlier, is there a
16	reason Oxy couldn't produce those for 180 days instead
17	of, say, 90?
18	A. There could be a very several reasons.
19	Sometimes you get shut out of a pipeline and you're
20	trying to keep wells on as you're negotiating pipeline
21	or as the plant is doing, you know, a turnaround.
22	That's one that's very common in West
23	Texas and New Mexico that I know of offhand.
24	Q. Nevertheless, if you were able to double the
25	production days, you would expect the production

1	values of any particular well to increase, isn't that
2	right?
3	A. Meaning if the well is on for more days, it
4	would have more production?
5	Q. Yes, ma'am.
6	A. Is that kind of what you're asking? I would
7	assume so.
8	Q. Okay. Are you aware that Oxy, between those
9	two OGRIDS, has 45 wells that produce less than ten
10	barrels of oil equivalent in fiscal year 2024?
11	A. No, no, I'm not familiar with that. I'm not
12	disputing it, but I'm not familiar.
13	Q. Okay. Thank you. Fair enough.
14	Are you familiar with the Sand Dunes 34
15	federal Number 3 well?
16	A. No, I'm not.
17	Q. I'm going to share my screen here. Do you
18	see that Ms. Montgomery?
19	A. Yes.
20	Q. Okay. I'm going to
21	A. It says "plug site released," so this is the
22	plugged well, right.
23	Q. Yes ma'am. That's my understanding.
24	A. Okay. Yeah.
25	Q. And if I'm not mistaken well, you can
	Page 151

1	tell me. But it looks like can you tell from this
2	production data when it was likely plugged?
3	A. No well no well, I guess there's a
4	little bit in 2024. Yeah, that was there were
5	it looks like there might have been a bit in 2024,
6	just from looking at your screen.
7	Q. So it's 2025. But from that, it would
8	either be 2024, after the 16 days of production, or
9	2025, where there's no production in volume or days.
10	Correct?
11	A. That's what it looks like on screen.
12	Q. I'll just represent to you this is from
13	OCD's permitting. It's the well-specific query for
14	this well we're discussing, which is an Oxy well.
15	So do you have an explanation or theory
16	as to why, over those last five years, before the
17	plugging, only 72 days of production and only five MCF
18	over that time period from 2021 until the plugging
19	this year?
20	A. So, without knowing the
21	MR. TUCKER: I'd like to object here. I
22	think this is a little outside the scope of
23	Ms. Montgomery's testimony.
24	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Mr. Hall.
25	MR. HALL: She specifically pointed out

1	specific Oxy wells to kind of go over her theory, and
2	we're just exploring that a little bit to discuss the
3	overarching reasons behind Oxy's position with regard
4	to the rules.
5	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: All right. So
6	Ms. Montgomery, if you can answer the question,
7	great. And if you don't know, that's fine too.
8	A. Okay. Well, with respect, my testimony is
9	about TA'd wells having the discretion of the Division
10	to bring them on for good cause, and I showed some
11	good cause.
12	But looking specifically at this well, I
13	don't know the specifics of this particular well or
14	why the production shows what it does.
15	Q. Would the fact that it's plugged indicate to
16	you that it was no longer capable of being economic
17	for Oxy?
18	A. Oxy chose to plug this well, so I'm assuming
19	they decided well, it could be no beneficial use,
20	it could be they decided that the well bore had too
21	many issues. I mean, there's a I don't know the
22	actual reason they plugged this well. But it didn't
23	have a lot of production, so obviously we plugged the
24	well for some reason.
25	Q. And this is kind of the crux of why I'm

1	asking about this. And we're talking about
2	timeframes, correct? And we're
3	A. For TA'd wells
4	Q. For TA'd
5	A and extensions.
6	Q. For TA'd wells, right?
7	A. Yes.
8	Q. We're talking about reasonable timeframes.
9	Any reason this well, it took more than
10	five years, given those production values, to plug it?
11	A. I don't have knowledge of this well.
12	Q. Now, there's been some discussion about
13	well, I'm going to pull up Mr. Rankin's famous
14	statute, if I can. Excuse me. Well, I don't think
15	that's working.
16	I think I noticed you've watched some
17	other testimony in this hearing; is that right,
18	Ms. Montgomery?
19	A. Only Ms. Wallace's testimony.
20	Q. Okay. Are you familiar with TA bonding in
21	New Mexico?
22	A. No, I'm not. I mean, I know I've heard of
23	it because I listened to Ms. Wallace's testimony, but
24	I'm not familiar with the rule in particular.
25	Q. Okay. Are you familiar that in the event

1	that a company or an operator has in excess of 25 TA'd
2	wells that there's a provision for \$1 million in
	<del>-</del>
3	blanket bonding?
4	A. Not until you just said it, no. I have not
5	been involved in the bonding with this hearing.
6	MR. HALL: Fair enough.
7	I'll pass the witness. Thank you.
8	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you.
9	Mr. Moore, do you have questions?
LO	MR. MOORE: I have limited questions, Madam
L1	Hearing Examiner. Thank you.
L2	CROSS-EXAMINATION
L3	BY MR. MOORE:
L4	Q. Good afternoon, Ms. Montgomery. My name is
L5	Richard Moore. I represent the commissioner of public
L6	lands and the State Land Office in this in this
L7	proceeding. Thank you for your testimony today. I'm
L8	going to share my screen quickly.
L9	So in the applicant's proposed
20	amendments to the definitions, expired temporary
21	abandonment or expired temporary abandonment status
22	means the status of a well that is inactive and has
23	been approved for temporary abandoned status in
24	accordance with 19.15.25.13 but no longer complies
25	with 19.15.25.12 through 19.15.25.14.

1	Do you know, is there a does the OCD
2	in their permitting have a status of inactive for
3	wells?
4	A. You mean so in their permitting, you
5	said. I mean, what do you mean.
6	Q. I guess is that is that a status that OCD
7	applies to wells?
8	A. Yes.
9	Q. I guess what I'm asking is, when you look up
10	a well, is "inactive" a category that the well can be
11	described in?
12	A. I'd have to look that up. I mean, we know
13	when we I think we now you're going to catch me
14	a little bit. I think I've seen an expired
15	temporary abandonment status. I believe it's called
16	inactive. Because we know after a certain amount of
17	times it'll show it as I think I believe it's
18	called inactive. I don't know if that's exactly what
19	it's called, but we know when it's been inactive for a
20	certain amount of time after the year or 15 months.
21	Q. And do you agree with this definition as
22	proposed by the applicants for expired temporary
23	abandonment?
24	A. So, without looking at exactly what the
25	`19.15.25.13, and 14 are I believe this question

1	was asked by Ms. Wallace, so I can defer to her
2	answer. If she agreed with it, then I agree with her.
3	I just don't know all the details of some of the
4	references. I apologize.
5	Q. That's all right. Do you think it would be
6	sufficient to define expired temporary abandonment as
7	the status of a well that has been approved for
8	temporary abandonment status in accordance with the
9	regulations, but no longer complies with those
10	regulations?
11	A. Yes.
12	Q. Without reference to inactive in the
13	definition itself?
14	A. Yes.
15	MR. MOORE: I believe that is all that I
16	have for questions. Thank you.
17	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you, Mr. Moore.
18	Ms. Nanasi, are you with us?
19	Mr. Maxwell, do you have questions of
20	Ms. Montgomery?
21	MR. MAXWELL: No questions, your Honor.
22	Thank you.
23	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you.
24	Mr. Sayer. No.
25	All right. Mr. Suazo.

1	MR. SUAZO: No questions from NMOGA, Madam
2	Hearing Officer.
3	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Mr. Cloutier. `
4	MR. CLOUTIER: I don't have any questions of
5	Ms. Montgomery, Madam Hearing Officer.
6	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you.
7	Mr. Tucker, do you have any redirect?
8	MR. TUCKER: Just a just a couple questions.
9	Thank you.
10	REDIRECT EXAMINATION
11	BY MR. TUCKER:
12	Q. Ms. Montgomery, you were asked some
13	questions by counsel for WELC regarding a graph
14	provided prepared by Mr. Alexander. Is Oxy the
15	applicant in this proceeding?
16	A. No, we're not.
17	Q. Is Oxy proposing to place a cap on the
18	timeline for temporary abandonment status?
19	A. No, we're not.
20	Q. Is it Oxy's burden to provide data
21	supporting the rule change?
22	A. No. No, it's not.
23	Q. Thank you. Just a couple more questions?
24	Counsel for the Oil Conservation
25	Division asked you some questions about a specific
	Page 158

1	well. Was that well part of the wells included in the
2	graph that were returned to production in the Hobbs
3	area?
4	A. No. No, it was not.
5	MR. TUCKER: Thank you. No further
6	questions.
7	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you.
8	Commissioner Ampomah.
9	COMMISSIONER AMPOMAH: Yes, I do have a few
10	questions. And if we can bring back these slides.
11	MR. TUCKER: Yes. One moment.
12	COMMISSIONER AMPOMAH: Thank you. Yeah,
13	let's start from slide Number 2. Thank you.
14	EXAMINATION
15	BY COMMISSIONER AMPOMAH:
16	Q. Yes. So you were asked about if you are
17	aware of any deficiencies in this existing rule, in
18	the existing rule, that cause concerns with integrity
19	of wells in approved TA status.
20	And I presume you I recall that your
21	response was no; is that correct?
22	A. That's correct.
23	Q. Now, my follow-up question on that will
24	be I'm not sure if you were able to listen to some
25	of the OCD witnesses.

1	A. Unfortunately, I was not, so
2	Q. Based on the witness statements, they talked
3	about all the issues that they have with the current
4	rules. You know, one example was they talked about 25
5	percent of the operators have now reported production
6	for some years now.
7	So, don't you believe that the current
8	rules, the proposed rules, will more or less give OCD
9	the flexibility to more or less work with these
10	companies to bring them into compliance?
11	A. So if I understand I'm trying to
12	understand which all the proposed rules, or what?
13	Kind of what are we talking about.
14	Q. Yeah. Let me let me expand on that. So
15	let's say with wells that have not reported production
16	for several years
17	A. So not necessarily TA'd wells, it's just
18	inactive wells.
19	Q. Exactly. Exactly.
20	A. Okay. Got it.
21	Q. So don't go ahead, please.
22	A. No, no, please.
23	Q. Yeah, so my question on that one is that
24	even for that simple example that we just went
25	through, don't you believe that the definition of
	Page 160

1	beneficial use and then even TA wells and all of that
2	will give OCD the opportunity to really go in there
3	and work with these operators to bring them to
4	compliance or more or less TA the well?
5	A. So I think Oxy, in general, agrees with a
6	lot of it, and we've worked with WELC on the proposal.
7	And I would have to stand by Oxy's red lines on that
8	for what we agree with on helping the OCD bring these
9	wells into compliance.
LO	Q. Yeah, let's go to your slide number 9.
L1	Yeah. And thanks so much for bringing this slide
L2	because, you know, I'm also a firm believer that wells
L3	go through numerous production cycles, you know, the
L <b>4</b>	primary, secondary, and then the tertiary.
L 5	You know, Oxy's case, you know, let's
L6	say it will be a great example, but my question to you
L7	is, do you have some other examples of operators that
L8	have gone through these type of cycles over the years?
L9	A. You know, my experience has been with Oxy.
20	I do not and this is a great example, and we had it
21	in Hobbs, and it's very timely, but I could say that
22	we have whole divisions in our company that are
23	looking at different types of enhanced oil recovery
24	that will be applicable to many different types of
25	wells.

1	And so seeing the great response we have
2	here in some of our pilot projects, we wouldn't want
3	to have to drill a new well or plug the well
4	prematurely if we can demonstrate that this well will
5	have beneficial use.
6	And we're not you know, we would
7	definitely have to demonstrate that. And that's
8	something that we would be prepared to do and think we
9	should be prepared to do.
10	Q. Now, based on all the discussions that we've
11	had for, let's say, a week now, don't you believe that
12	your concerns of OCD monitors having flexibility on TA
13	well administration has been addressed some way,
14	somehow?
15	A. In testimony that it's been addressed.
16	Q. Yes, especially through the exceptions that
17	have been proposed?
18	A. I believe I haven't heard all the
19	testimony, so I apologize. And so I'll have to just
20	step back to, you know, just knowing that we have
21	that the Division has some flexibility, like we have
22	proposed here and Oxy has proposed in the red line.
23	That's really what I'm asking.
24	I'm not trying to avoid the question,
25	I'm just not exactly sure because I haven't listened
	Page 162

1	to all the different testimony.
2	But what we've talked about here, that's
3	exactly what we would propose as Oxy to give us
4	some the Division, some flexibility on that TA'd
5	wells for good cause.
6	COMMISSIONER AMPOMAH: Thank you for your
7	time. I do not have any questions?
8	THE WITNESS: Thank you.
9	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Commissioner Bloom,
10	do you have questions of Ms. Montgomery?
11	COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Yes. Thank you, Madam
12	Hearing Officer.
13	EXAMINATION
14	BY COMMISSIONER BLOOM:
15	Q. Good afternoon, Ms. Montgomery. Thank you
16	for your time today.
17	A. Thank you, Good afternoon.
18	Q. And if we could, could we go back to that
19	slide again that we were just looking at? That'd be
20	helpful.
21	COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Thank you, Mr. Tucker.
22	I appreciate that.
23	BY COMMISSIONER BLOOM:
24	Q. Pull up my question here. Ms. Montgomery, I
25	appreciate your thoughtful testimony today. I think

1	as Dr. Ampomah stated, and I don't think it's lost on
2	any of us up here, that these wells can be resources.
3	And of course Oxy and many other operators see wells
4	in TA status and think resource. And from the OCC
5	lens, you know, and from the lens of the land office,
6	we may also see resource, and a lot of times we see a
7	resource there, but we also see risk, and that weighs
8	on us. We owe responsibility to the state to ensure
9	public health and protect the environment.
10	And I think there's some waste issues in
11	the balance here, as well, when wells are not produced
12	for years and years or a very low production.
13	Mr. Alexander's data shows, I think you
14	saw what the applicants put up, just a little bit ago,
15	that 98.5 percent of wells are back in production
16	after six years. And under this rule, you have eight
17	years. And so I look at this graph and see oil
18	production really dip around 2009, 2010. And by 2015,
19	2016, obviously you'd taken matters you'd begun
20	working on this Hobbs EOR project. And right about
21	seven years, eight years, we see oil production
22	increase.
23	Does this speak to some ability that Oxy
24	would have to be able to work these sorts of wells and
25	turn them around before eight years?

A. So, you know, Oxy is known for EOR. We're the biggest EOR operator in the well. So this is what we do, and we're very familiar with it. I'm not sure all the other statistics take into account EOR, which is why I really wanted to testify today, to show what can be done if we use EOR.

And so the ability to be able to bring our case and show when we have definite plans that we're working through and have that taken into account and have the Division be able to have some discretion, that's really my point here with what I'm doing. And I'm not sure I exactly answered your question. Can you redirect me if I did not.

Q. No, I think you did just fine. It was -you know, it was more of a statement than a question,
really. And I appreciate that. And certainly when I
think of who's doing EOR in New Mexico's Permian, I
think of Oxy, of course, and see a company with
resources that, you know, takes some dismally
producing wells and turns them around, and all of a
sudden those wells are producing 2,500 barrels a day.
That's significant, and, you know, we have a mandate
to produce value for our landowners, our
beneficiaries, the school kids in New Mexico, and
weigh that and weigh that against risk.

1	And, of course, I see a company like Oxy
2	and think, you know, this is one of the companies I
3	would be, you know, less concerned with than many
4	others that we have. But the point of the value of
5	these wells is not lost on me.
6	So, Ms. Montgomery, thank you for your
7	time and testimony today. I think we've kept you up
8	late if you're actually in London there.
9	A. I am. Thank you.
10	COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Take care.
11	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Chair Chang?
12	CHAIR CHANG: No. No questions.
13	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Well, all righty.
14	Any reason not to excuse Ms. Montgomery?
15	Thank you very much, Ms. Montgomery, for
16	your testimony.
17	THE WITNESS: Thank you. I appreciate the
18	opportunity. Have a good evening, everyone.
19	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: I think we move to
20	NMOGA at this point, Mr. Suazo.
21	MR. SUAZO: Thank you, Madam Hearing
22	Officer. Let me pull up some slides. NMOGA is going
23	to make its opening statement and then call its first
24	witness.
2.5	

## 1 OPENING STATEMENT BY MR. SUAZO 2 All right. Well, good afternoon, Commissioners, Mr. Chair, Madam Hearing Officer. 3 Му name is Miguel Suazo. I am with the law firm Beatty & 4 Wozniak, joined today by my colleague, Jacob Everhart, 6 and we are energy and natural resources attorneys. focus primarily, especially in proceedings like this, 8 on the regulatory side of the energy space. 9 And it's our honor today to be here representing the New Mexico Oil and Gas Association, which, as I'm sure 10 11 you all know, represents operators, large and small, 12 who provide the infrastructure to the energy backbone 13 of New Mexico's oil and gas industry and help support the state's general fund. 14 15 Now, NMOGA's members are committed to operating 16 responsibly, safeguarding the environment, and keeping 17 New Mexico the national leader that it is in energy production, while supporting the public institutions 18 that make our state thrive, institutions that myself 19 and my colleague have both benefited from as native 20 New Mexicans. 2.1 22 Now, this proceeding is an important one. It is one of the most significant rulemakings that we've had in 23 2.4 New Mexico in a long time. And I feel like the applicants that brought this proceeding are 25

1	well-intentioned, and the Division, who is supporting
2	this proceeding has some very clear concerns that
3	we've been educated about as this proceeding has gone
4	forward. We've learned a lot already at this stage in
5	this proceeding.
6	However, NMOGA and its members have some very
7	significant concerns about what's proposed. And I
8	think that the crux of the issue is not the what, it's
9	the how and the why about the regulations that are
10	being proposed.
11	Now, applicants have asked the Commission to define
12	beneficial use and marginal wells to expand the
13	financial assurance requirements that operators must
14	maintain to operate in New Mexico. And they have
15	specifically asked the Commission to authorize
16	increased financial assurances.
17	Now, we've heard the Division say that there are
18	certain issues in this proceeding that they do not
19	feel they can compromise on. And one of those things
20	was Deputy Director Powell said: We want to decrease
21	the 15 month to 13 months.
22	We heard that, understood. Well, from industry's
23	perspective, there are certain areas where we are
24	willing to work with the parties and the Commission to
25	make sure that the rules that are put in place make

1	sense, not just today, but over the long term. But
2	one of the areas where the industry feels that we are
3	on solid footing is on the authority of the Commission
4	and the Division in terms of what they're able to
5	adopt statutorily.
6	Now, there's been back and forth in this proceeding.
7	We're looking forward to you all hearing from our
8	legal witnesses and their interpretations. There's
9	motions in front of the Commission about that
10	statutory authority. And it's one thing to read the
11	statute, as some folks in the proceeding have done.
12	It's another thing to understand the legal case law
13	behind the interpretation of that statutory authority
14	by New Mexico's courts.
15	And we look forward to presenting those arguments and
16	findings to you so that you can make an informed
17	decision about what the Commission is and is not able
18	to do for purposes of addressing the issues that are
19	so critical to this proceeding.
20	Now, I think one thing that we've learned so far is,
21	you know, it's been presented as an orphan well
22	crisis. And WELC presented, you know, 60,000 wells
23	that are going to ostensibly cost billions of dollars.
24	But I think it's important to remember that those
25	costs are going to be met over time by industry and

1	the public and other parties that are stakeholders in
2	this whole process over a long duration.
3	But I think what's really critical is that OCD's
4	testimony has really allowed us to focus on what they
5	are concerned about. And those are, as they dug, high
6	risk wells and high risk operators. Industry has
7	heard that message.
8	And one of the things that has been brought to the
9	fore in this proceeding is a report from the
LO	legislative finance committee. And I'm glad that it
11	has, because I think there's really important
L2	information in that report. And if there's one thing
13	that this Commission should do, that I urge you to do,
14	is to read that report in its entirety. Because the
15	information and data in there, I think, can be used to
16	help inform the regulations that this Commission
L7	ultimately adopts and that hopefully industry and
L8	applicants can ultimately live with.
19	You know, I think that a lot of these proposals have
20	the potential effect to really impact the smaller
21	operators more than some of the other operators. And
22	as somebody who's worked in New Mexico economic
23	development for years, I can't think of another time
24	when a government entity would pass a rule that
25	impacted New Mexico's small businesses.

Now, that's not to say that they shouldn't help
protect and steward the environment and operate in a
responsible manner, but jobs are a premium in a poor
state like ours, and I think that should also be
brought to the fore and considered as part and parcel
of the consideration of these rules.
Now, you're going to hear a lot, and you have heard a
lot, about whether or not industry was involved in
this process. And as best as I can tell, I think that
the origination of applicants and OCD's assertions
that industry was involved stems back to, I think,
some statutory negotiations.
Well, this is not a statutory proceeding. This is a
rulemaking, and those are two very different
proceedings. And I think that it is fair and it is
accurate that NMOGA and industry were not made part of
this rulemaking proceeding and the lead up to it until
just before it was filed. And so I would ask that the
Commission appreciate the perspective of NMOGA, not
that you have to agree with it, but understand where
our members are coming from, that we did not get the
input into these rules until just before it was filed.
And I think that's unfortunate, because we have
learned a lot to date, and I think that industry is
getting to the point where we can offer some informed

1	feedback about what is being proposed. And that is
2	where we're going now with the start of our case in
3	chief. And I am really excited for you guys to hear
4	from our witnesses.
5	We have some of the foremost experts on the issues
6	that are before us. And I want to offer them you
7	know, originally coming into this proceeding, we
8	thought is going to be more of a critique of these
9	rules. And to be sure, we are going to critique these
10	rules, but our witnesses are also going to help inform
11	the Commission on how these rules can be made more
12	effective, more practical, and more meaningful. And
13	that's important, because the only thing worse than a
14	rule is a bad rule.
15	And at the end of the day, whatever this Commission
16	decides to adopt, it is the regulator, the Division,
17	and the industry that are going to have to live with
18	those rules that are adopted for the long term. And
19	we want to make sure that those rules make the most
20	sense from an operational and administrative
21	standpoint.
22	Now, you're going to hear from our first witness, Dan
23	Arthur, who has decades of experience across a range
24	of oil and gas issues. And he's going to touch on the
25	really critical concerns and provide valuable feedback

1	that the Commission can use to inform the rules that
2	it ultimately adopts.
3	We're also bringing an actual surety expert, a person
4	who's actually issued bonds and reviewed bonds and
5	lived the life in issuing these financial assurances
6	that operators must secure to operate across the
7	nation. And so we're looking forward to him helping
8	you understand the unique financial assurance
9	framework that exists in New Mexico in a well where
10	there's non-cancel bonds and also state and federal
11	issues that must be contemplated in addition to the
12	issues that the OCD considers every day.
13	It is our hope that at the end of this, of our case in
14	chief and at the end of this proceeding, that the
15	Commission will adopt risk-based and market-sensible
16	regulations that industry and the Commission can live
17	with now and over time.
18	And finally, I would like to say that NMOGA considers
19	itself a partner with the Commission and the Division
20	in this process. We're here to help inform your
21	decisions because we want to have a thriving oil and
22	gas industry. We look forward to presenting to you
23	our witnesses and our evidence, and we look forward to
24	working with you on a collaborative solution that will
25	make sense for New Mexico now and over time.

1	Thank you.
2	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you.
3	Mr. Suazo, we're kind of in an awkward place, an hour
4	from lunch break, so it occurs to me that either your
5	witness could do about half and then we could take a
6	break, or we can just take a short break now.
7	MR. SUAZO: He's going to be a lengthy
8	witness, so I think if you want to take a break now,
9	that makes sense.
10	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Okay. Let's just
11	take 10 minutes now.
12	(Recess held from 2:00 to 2:10 p.m.)
13	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Mr. Arthur, would you
14	spell your first and last name for the transcript,
15	please.
16	THE WITNESS: Oh, am I here now? Can you
17	hear me?
18	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: And do swear or
19	affirm to tell the truth?
20	THE WITNESS: I do.
21	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you.
22	Mr. Suazo.
23	MR. SUAZO: Thank you, Madam Hearing
24	Officer.
25	

1	DAN ARTHUR,
2	having first been duly sworn, testified as follows:
3	DIRECT EXAMINATION
4	BY MR. SUAZO:
5	Q. Mr. Arthur, good afternoon. How are you
6	today?
7	A. Doing good.
8	Q. You know, it might amuse you to know that
9	when I was reviewing your slides, my three-year-old
10	walked in and jumped on my lap and thought I was
11	looking at the ABCs.
12	A. Okay, maybe.
13	Q. So, Mr. Arthur, thank you for being here
14	today. If you can please let's go to slide 2.
15	We're going to start with your direct testimony and we
16	want to talk to you about your role and your purpose
17	in this proceeding.
18	Can you please state your name and your
19	role in this rulemaking.
20	A. My name is Dan Arthur. I'm the lead witness
21	for NMOGA. And my purpose here really is giving an
22	overview of NMOGA's position for this and also to
23	really kind of set some ground basis for the other
24	experts.
25	For myself, I am the lead technical

1	expert. I have testified on more than 2,500 dockets
2	across the country, more than a hundred different
3	litigation cases from federal, state, county,
4	et cetera, and including the rule for the in front
5	of the Commission.
6	I'm a registered professional engineer
7	in 36 states including the state of New Mexico,
8	registered professional petroleum engineer, certified
9	petroleum geologist, a bunch of other stuff. I used
10	to work for the U.S. EPA. I was an expert with EPA in
11	the UIC program. I've done lots of different things
12	that the slides go over here.
13	MR. SUAZO: We won't spend time on all of
14	the slides, but just for the Commission's knowledge,
15	he has an extensive background. And I want
16	Mr. Arthur to really focus on kind of the scope of
17	his testimony.
18	Let's go to slide 8.
19	BY MR. SUAZO:
20	Q. So, Mr. Arthur, did you file direct
21	testimony in this case?
22	A. Yes, I did.
23	Q. What was the scope of your direct testimony?
24	A. It really comes down to seven general issues
25	here. One is the new definition of beneficial

purposes or beneficial use and related proposed
presumptions of no beneficial use.
Changes to when wells are to be either
temporarily or permanently plugged and abandoned.
Amendments to New Mexico's existing
temporarily abandonment program.
New definitions of marginal well.
The increased \$150,000 individual
financial assurance requirements.
Removal of the blanket alternatives, and
other financial assurance changes.
Changes to waste prevention
requirements.
And new requirements for operator
registration and change of operator, essentially.
Q. Thank you, Mr. Arthur. And I'd like to
start, at the outset, with your conclusions in this
proceeding. And then we can get into kind of the
justifications and rationale behind those conclusions.
Can you please share with the Commission
the conclusions that you reached and what you reported
at the end of your direct testimony?
A. Yes, sir. And I'll apologize up front. We
have a number of things to go to. These conclusions

1	introductory, the applicant's proposals are, in my
2	opinion, and this is 45-plus years of experience, are
3	overly rigid, operationally impractical, and
4	economically disruptive.
5	The proposals discredit the value of and
6	disproportionately impact marginal wells. A
7	risk-based financial assurance regimes that reflect
8	factors such as well-depth compliance, history,
9	condition of the well, all that are really a better
10	balance and make more economic sense and stability.
11	The Commission can ensure that its rules
12	remain both enforceable and align with technical and
13	economic realities of modern oil and gas development
14	in the state, you know, preserving the regulatory
15	discretion that it currently has, maintaining the
16	five-year term of temporarily abandonment and other
17	things.
18	Q. Thank you. Let's move on to the subject of
19	waste, slide 10. What are your overarching concerns
20	with the proposed amendments and additions proposed by
21	applicants and supported by OCD with respect to waste?
22	A. I have dealt with this issue many times over
23	the last several decades and worked with many of the
24	state oil and gas directors and companies and just the
25	concern with waste and premature plugging of viable

1	wells that once plugged are lost forever, when
2	technology to utilize these wells exists. And there's
3	so many examples of wells going on for many years.
4	The applicant's proposal will either
5	directly or indirectly result in premature plugging of
6	otherwise potentially economic wells and units, and
7	it's significantly here in my opinion, it's the
8	State of New Mexico's responsibility to protect and
9	effectively use its natural resources.
10	Premature plugging could mean that those
11	resources are lost forever, similar to what Oxy talked
12	about. Had they plugged those wells that EOR project
13	may never have occurred.
14	Q. Thank you, Mr. Arthur. Let's move on to
15	slide 11, which goes over the new definition of
16	beneficial purposes and use and the related
17	presumptions of no beneficial use.
18	A. You want to go to the next
19	Q. Yes, slide 12, please. So let's start with
20	the applicant's proposal to define beneficial use or
21	beneficial purpose and create a separate presumption
22	of no beneficial use provision.
23	What would applicants define beneficial
24	use or purpose as?
25	A. So this one is very concerning to me, but

1 beneficial use is an oil or gas well that is being 2 used in a productive or beneficial manner, such as production injection or monitoring, and does not 3 include the use of wells for speculative purposes. 4 5 And this is tough for me as a petroleum 6 engineer. As a petroleum engineer, I'm the only engineer there is that never gets to see what I built. 8 I don't get to see a building, a bridge, a road, a 9 street, any of that. We have to use the data that we have to think about how things are underground. 10 11 And when I look at beneficial, I've done 12 work, including working with OCD, BLM, others, on best 13 management practices, beneficial use of produced water and so forth, that idea of what beneficial is, is 14 15 tough. 16 And then speculative purposes, you know, 17 this is the oil and gas industry, we do all that we 18 can, but we still speculate, not using some silly 19 dictionary definition that was proposed by earlier 20 witnesses. But we do the best that we can and we speculate. If we didn't speculate, we'd never have a 2.1 22 dry hole, right? I mean, it's just, we're trying 23 here. And this isn't waving our arms. This is the 2.4 industry doing everything it can. So that term 25 speculative really bothers me.

1	Q. Thank you. Let's move on to the next slide
2	to continue with this issue. Can you tell us what's
3	reflected on this slide?
4	A. So, New Mexico has historically extended
5	beneficial use beyond volume-based thresholds or
6	narrowly defined productive activities. And
7	historically, OCD has recognized the various variety
8	of beneficial uses, you know, using on-lease fuel,
9	equipment power, et cetera.
LO	But many of these functions are
L1	essential to field development and compliance and are
L2	not speculative, even though they might seem
L3	speculative.
L4	Inclusion of the term speculative as a
L5	disqualifying factor, without definition, introduces
L6	so much subjectivity and regulatory uncertainty and so
L7	forth. It's just very much of an issue and risk of
L8	introducing duplicative standards. It is just tough
L9	with enforcement and many things.
20	Q. Thanks for that background and insight,
21	Mr. Arthur. Let's move on to slide 14. Can you
22	explain to the Commission your recommendation on
23	beneficial use?
23 24	beneficial use?  A. Well, I would say do not define beneficial

1	purposes from any adopted definition. So adopting the
2	proposed definition would likely result in
3	misclassification of viable wells and, in my opinion,
4	increased plugging obligations, associated loss of
5	production and tax revenue.
6	I recommend rejecting adding the new
7	defined term of beneficial purposes and beneficial
8	use. You know, in the event the Commission proceeds
9	with this, I would totally reject the speculative
LO	language.
L1	And we have another expert that's coming
L2	in later that will be talking a little bit about some
L3	options for the Commission to consider.
L4	Q. Very good. Let's move on to slide 15, which
L5	is the related new presumption of no beneficial use.
L6	Can you walk the Commission through your understanding
L7	of that proposal?
L8	A. This criteria really just, you know,
L9	presumes that a production well is not capable of
20	beneficial use if triggered during any consecutive
21	12-month period where, you know, less than 90 days of
22	production, less than 90 BOE and a similar one for
23	injection wells.
24	There's an exemption, you know, period
25	for wells drilled and completed, but the procedure

1	that makes presumption rebuttal, this is tough.
2	Q. Let's move on to slide 16. This sets forth
3	for the sole application process to refute the
4	preliminary determination.
5	How would this presumption work
6	procedurally, and does it create a reasonable and
7	meaningful way for operators to rebut that
8	presumption, in your view?
9	A. So, you know, in this, you know, a well not
10	being used for beneficial purposes would have 30 days
11	to apply for administrative review. Thirty days is
12	tight for any operator, not to mention the Division
13	looking at this, but application for PD review and
14	required to include operational and financial
15	documentation, you know, forecast demonstration,
16	current or future production, a lot of information
17	that takes time to get that is that may not even
18	consider all the things that should be.
19	Q. All right. Let's move on to the next slide.
20	What are your recommendations with respect to the
21	proposed presumption of the no beneficial use
22	provision?
23	A. So I would say to wholly reject the rigid
24	90-day criteria. And, again, as I noted earlier, you
25	know, keeping flexibility and so forth is good.
	Page 183

1	If the presumption must be adopted, you
2	know, extending it to 12 months, three years, five
3	years. Five years would be aligned with the maximum
4	EPA approval period, and that would make more sense to
5	me.
6	If the presumption must be adopted, I
7	would make sure that we account for documented
8	infrastructure plans and delays. You know, we had
9	discussions about, like, you know, why did it take
10	eight years, and you think you're completely redoing
11	an entire oil field with water infrastructure, and all
12	these pumps and equipment and so forth and permitting.
13	It's a lot. Projected use with defined field
14	development plans, monitoring data, a lot of different
15	things that just don't happen overnight.
16	Q. And I'm glad you brought that up,
17	Mr. Arthur, because I think the next slide deals with
18	the risks and potential impact of ignoring how wells
19	can be used strategically.
20	What are the risks and potential impacts
21	of ignoring the strategic use of wells within the
22	industry?
23	A. So some of the risks that I see is that this
24	90-day criteria, it's going to disproportionately
25	impact smaller operators. They're not going to be

1 able to move as fast. We work with a lot of small 2 operators, and it takes time. 3 It's going to discourage incremental development, possible loss of leasehold rights or 4 5 disruption of unit agreements. And it's going to 6 promote premature plugging of viable wells, which, again, is a waste. 8 But using the 90-day criteria to 9 determine whether a well is capable of beneficial use ignores operational value and nonproductive but 10 11 regulatory infrastructure-related functions; you know, 12 leasehold maintenance, reservoir management, environmental compliance. There's a lot of different 13 14 things that operators and the OCD need to consider 15 here. 16 Q. Let's move on to slide 19, which discusses 17 the risks and potential impact of time beneficial use for production. 18 19 What are the risks and potential impact 20 of time beneficial use solely to well production? 2.1 A. So, production can vary due to market, 22 seasonal, infrastructure factors, like pipeline take-away capacity, gas plant downtime. I'm dealing 23 2.4 with a project right now where a gas plant shut down. 150 wells or shut in; wells awaiting re-completion, 25

1	refracs, reactivation, artificial lift systems. I
2	mean, it's like you want an engine right now, with all
3	the AI stuff going on, it takes forever.
4	I mean, a well's capacity for beneficial
5	use to production volumes is short-sighted and doesn't
6	account for the complexities of the oil and gas
7	industry and operators; particularly with marginal
8	wells and shared infrastructure.
9	Q. And importantly, is it your understanding
LO	that if this 90-day criteria is triggered, the
L1	presumption results in a preliminary determination,
L2	which, if not refuted, becomes a determination that a
L3	well is not capable of beneficial use, correct?
L <b>4</b>	A. That is my understanding. I'm not an
L5	attorney, but that's my understanding.
L6	Q. Fair enough.
L7	Let's move to slide 20, which deals with
L8	the proposal to change when wells are to be properly
L9	P&A'd. And this is in 19.15.25.8 NMAC, which sets
20	forth when plugging and abandonment obligations are
21	triggered.
22	And on the next slide, slide 21, can you
23	please walk us through the current framework for when
24	a well must be either temporarily abandoned or
25	permanently plugged?

1	A. So, the applicant has proposed shortening
2	the action deadline from 90 days to 30 days, modifying
3	the requirements to place wells in approved
4	temporarily abandonment within the compliance window
5	instead of requiring the operator to apply to do so
6	within the new 30-day time frame. And they strike the
7	work "continuously" from the definition.
8	Q. And is it your understanding that a
9	determination of no beneficial use is one of only
10	three triggering events that create a legal obligation
11	to P&A a well?
12	A. Again, I'm not an attorney, but that's my
13	understanding.
14	Q. Let's move on to slide 22. What are your
15	concerns with changes proposed to when wells are to be
16	temporarily or permanently abandoned?
17	A. So, I plugged a lot of wells and work in
18	that space very actively now. But the changes are
19	contrary to actual timelines for plugging abandonment.
20	Typically, once a decision is made, it
21	may take from 6 to 18 months to get a well plugged,
22	from internal review, cost estimating, contractor
23	mobilization, permitting, scheduling. And a lot of
24	that's going to depend on the depths of the well, site
25	conditions, access.

1	Timelines can even extend further, just
2	like we had the example of the OWL in the wellhead
3	earlier. But surface access issues, other things.
4	These timeframes can represent minimums. You know,
5	often there's other requirements, you know, weather,
6	wildlife, floods, fires. I mean, all sorts of
7	different things.
8	Q. Thanks, Mr. Arthur. Let's move on to slide
9	23. Did you submit direct testimony on the
10	applicant's proposed changes to New Mexico's existing
11	temporary abandonment program
12	A. I did.
13	Q Under 19.15.25?
14	A. I did.
15	Q. And would you like to adopt that here
16	verbally?
17	A. Yes.
18	Q. Let's move on to slide 24. Can you briefly
19	just walk us through what's on this slide with
20	approved temporary abandonment?
21	A. This is, again, just you know, the
22	changes require operators to justify a well's future
23	use to obtain approval from OCD. It imposes excessive
24	and burdensome documentation requests as part of that
25	process, and limits the ATA status extensions beyond

1	the initial approval period of two years.
2	Q. And next slide, slide 25, which deals with
3	the 25.13 pertaining to demonstrating mechanical
4	integrity, can you please talk to us a little bit
5	about that?
6	A. So, this is significant because it changes
7	what was once a notice to now a request and requires
8	cross-references and demonstration operator that the
9	well will be used for beneficial use and approved TA.
10	It increases casing requirements.
11	Q. Okay. And next slide, slide 26, which also
12	deals with mechanical integrity. Can you please
13	explain the significance of this slide?
14	A. But I apologize, I'm trying to go quickly
15	and at a high level here just to run through these.
16	But again, what was once a notice is now a request,
17	requires cross-reference, a demonstration of the
18	operator that the well be used for beneficial use with
19	approved TA status and so forth.
20	
	Q. Okay. And I think, you know, moving on to
21	Q. Okay. And I think, you know, moving on to slide 27, 28, I think that, you know, what you're
21 22	
	slide 27, 28, I think that, you know, what you're
22	slide 27, 28, I think that, you know, what you're trying to say here is that these definitional changes
22 23	slide 27, 28, I think that, you know, what you're trying to say here is that these definitional changes were characterized as clarifications. But do you

1	Q. Can you please walk us through that,
2	starting with slide 28?
3	A. So, this is adding a new single definition
4	for expired temporary abandonment and expired
5	temporarily abandonment status as proposed here. And
6	I think I go through more detail on the next slide.
7	Q. Okay. Let's move to the next slide. So you
8	submitted direct testimony regarding the proposal to
9	add a definition of beneficial use or purposes and the
LO	related presumptions.
L1	What other definitions and related
L2	proposals will promote waste and will result in
L3	premature plugging, into your view?
L4	A. This definition proposal of adding a new
L5	definition for marginal wells and increase their
L6	financial assurance obligations.
L7	Q. And moving on to slide 30, what is the
L8	proposed definition of marginal well?
L9	A. That an oil and gas oil that produces less
20	than 180 days and less than 1,000 barrel oil
21	equivalent a year within a particular within a
22	consecutive 12-month period would be considered
23	marginal.
24	Q. Have you heard testimony in this proceeding
25	proposing to lower that amount from 1,000 to 750 or
	Page 190

1	maybe even lower?
2	A. I haven't been on all the watching
3	everything, but that's my understanding based on
4	reading some of the stuff that has reading the
5	testimony, that that may be a consideration.
6	Q. And was that what was proposed in the LFC
7	report, do you recall? Would you believe it if
8	A. Yes, I think it is. I think it is. I'm
9	hesitant of saying absolutely without seeing that
10	right here in front of me.
11	Q. Would lowering that volume amount make more
12	sense than 1,000 BOE?
13	A. It would make more sense. But, again, I
14	truly feel that putting these specific days and
15	volumes to specifically say what a marginal well is
16	across the board, it's a little tough.
17	Q. Okay. And let's move on to slide 31. What
18	are your recommendations and concerns with the
19	definition of marginal well that applicants propose?
20	A. Based on my experience, it should not be
21	defined. But if it is, it must be grounded in an
22	operational economic context, considering leasehold
23	strategy, reservoir management needs, cash flow
24	projections, not just abstract thresholds.
25	And if it must be defined, then the
	Page 191

1	definition should incorporate flexibility to allow for
2	case-by-case economic assessments, as is done in ATA
3	and other areas.
4	Q. Into other states'
5	A. Yes
6	Q marginal issues that better align with
7	regulatory realities?
8	A. Yes.
9	Q. Let's move on to slide 32. What would the
10	definition of a marginal well be used for and what are
11	the proposals by applicants in your you view that are
12	implicated here through this definition?
13	A. So this deals with a revised financial
14	assurance of \$150,000 for each marginal well prior to
15	transfer and more. But this gets down to the per-well
16	financial assurance issue.
17	Q. And would raising these financial assurance
18	amounts impact asset transfers and changes of
19	operators?
20	A. Absolutely.
21	Q. Can you explain why?
22	A. So when you have this one tracking it, and
23	the things that are in here are tough, but assuring
24	that that's done, assuring that everything is there,
25	this can become a challenge.

1	Q. Let's move on to slide 33, still dealing on
2	with marginal wells. What is a marginal well
3	producing in terms of volume and value, and why are
4	they important to New Mexico?
5	A. I will say that marginally producing wells
б	in New Mexico collectively contribute a meaningful
7	share of the national production. Marginally
8	producing wells represent significant portions of
9	New Mexico's oil and gas portfolio. Huge losses,
10	financial losses and repercussions, including lost tax
11	revenue, could result if this is moved forward with.
12	And I will also note, this is
13	significant, I think, is marginally producing is not
14	necessarily synonymous with end of life. I know wells
15	that have been producing over 100 years.
16	Q. And I think that brings us to, you know,
17	comparison to some other states and whether or not
18	they define marginal wells. And it's my understanding
19	that not all jurisdictions choose to define marginal
20	well; is that correct?
21	A. That is correct.
22	Q. How do applicant's proposed definition of
23	marginal wells compare to other jurisdictions that did
24	elect to define the term?
25	A. So this is you know, you have the table
	Page 193

1	here, but, like, if you look at North Dakota, they,
2	they have a couple of different definitions.
3	One, less than ten barrels a day for
4	wells, you know, under 6,000 feet in depth; less than
5	35 barrels a day for deep wells in the Bakken or the
6	Three Forks.
7	And North Dakota is a little different
8	because, you know, the first oil well wasn't drilled
9	in North Dakota till 1956. And, you know, you had the
10	Bakken come in later and the Three Forks. So you
11	have, like, kind of really two categories of wells in
12	the whole state.
13	And now, it's very different than
14	New Mexico with the San Juan and coal, methane, all of
15	these other things.
16	But there's other ones per state that
17	have looked at this and tried to provide a broader
18	category.
19	Q. So in your view, are there risks or impacts
20	inherent in adopting a rigid definition of marginal
21	well as proposed by applicants?
22	A. That's my opinion.
23	Q. So, based upon all that you've touched on
24	with respect to marginal wells, can you please provide
25	the Commission with your concerns with adding a

1	definition of marginal wells in New Mexico?
2	A. So, as noted on the slide, the risk of
3	premature plugging in marginal wells yet viable, it
4	just gets amplified by these financial assurance
5	proposals.
6	So if you look at this on an overall
7	basis, there are serious cost implications for the
8	State of New Mexico and operators alike. If you look
9	at, you know, some of the numbers here and, you know,
10	what percentage of the wells and what they've
11	contributed for marginal wells in the state of
12	New Mexico.
13	And then if you look at just FY 2024,
14	industry contributed 49 percent, about \$7.4 billion,
15	into the State of New Mexico general fund.
16	And if you look at the production, you
17	know, of the marginal well portion of that, it's not
18	insignificant. This is, you know, over a billion
19	dollars.
20	Q. Let's move on to slide 37, because I'd like
21	for you to discuss for the Commission the proposals to
22	increase financial assurance requirements for marginal
23	wells. Next slide. And let's start with slide 38?
24	A. So, this, I'd say of significance here, is
25	the \$150,000 per well bond and what essentially

1	ultimately gets rid of the blanket bond approach. But
2	it provides essentially a stacked financial assurance
3	program for marginal wells.
4	Q. Let's move on to the proposed financial
5	assurance increases for active wells. What are those
6	proposals?
7	A. So the current financial assurance
8	requirements for active wells are risk-based, which, I
9	think, you know, the OCD, the OCC, states in general
10	didn't do that for no reason.
11	So right now, starting at \$25,000 plus
12	an amount determined by depth and offered tier blanket
13	bonding alternatives of \$250,000 is only required to
14	secure 100-plus active wells.
15	The proposed increases for active wells
16	financial assurance requirements of \$150,000 per well
17	or \$250,000 blanket bond alternative. So the scope of
18	active wells financial assurance requirements change
19	because applicant's proposal would add new marginal
20	well requirements, expand inactive requirements to the
21	scope, and add new grounds to inactive to align with
22	the proposed definition of beneficial.
23	So if you start looking at this and
24	we've heard a lot of testimony over the last few days
25	about it, but in my opinion, it's unworkable and will

1	unnecessarily exponentially increase the bonding
2	requirements for wells which post the least risk that
3	are most prevalent in New Mexico and will drive
4	business and tax revenue out of the state, absolutely.
5	Q. All right. Now let's move on to the current
6	financial assurance requirements for inactive wells.
7	Can you briefly walk us through that on slide 40?
8	A. So this shows in red what's proposed, but,
9	you know, inactive wells and wells in approved and
10	expired temporarily abandoned status and so forth.
11	But this comes back to the \$150,000 per well and
12	blanket plugging financial assurance equal to an
13	average of \$150,000 per well.
14	Q. And then for the next class of wells, which
15	are active wells, how do applicants propose amending
16	those financial requirements? Slide 41.
17	A. Currently, financial assurance for inactive
18	wells or risk-based. We talked a little bit about
19	that. But proposed financial assurance for inactive
20	wells and wells in temporarily abandonment status
21	would be \$150,000, with no true blanket bond
22	alternative.
23	So \$150,000 well, average blanket bond
24	creates a moving target, really, when you look at what
25	wells are being done, especially over time, which in

1 turn creates internal compliance risk. 2 So just like the active well proposals, the inactive well financial assurance requirements 3 are, in my opinion, unworkable, unnecessarily 4 5 exponentially increase the bonding requirements for 6 wells, which NMOGA P&A expert is going to talk about here a little bit later. But it'll also certainly 8 drive business out of the state. 9 O. Let's move on to slide 42. What is the expanded scope of inactive wells that are subject to 10 11 heightened bonding requirements under applicants 12 proposal? 13 A. So this shows the existing and proposed language, which I won't read, but it could effectively 14 15 also be expanded to any well which has had no 16 production or injection for 12 consecutive months 17 because OCD's separately proposals to modify the definition of inactive well by adding those new 18 19 grounds to align with proposed new definition of 20 beneficial. 2.1 Q. And moving on to slide 43, dealing with 22 proposed financial assurance increases for marginal 23 wells, and they're tied to the inactive territory, 2.4 what are the new requirements and what are your

Page 198

concerns with this proposal from applicants?

25

1	A. So the new \$150,000 financial assurance
2	requirements for all individually secured marginal
3	wells would start in 2028. If the new less than
4	15 percent threshold, which is very small for marginal
5	or inactive wells portfolios, beginning at \$150,000
6	requirement applies to every well registered to the
7	operator, regardless of active, marginal and inactive,
8	inclusion of these requirements will exponentially
9	increase bonding.
10	In rulemaking, this rigid, unrealistic
11	threshold set by definition, and keeping in mind the
12	prevalence of marginal wells in New Mexico, will have
13	a devastating impact.
14	Q. All right. And moving to slide 45, can you
15	please walk us through your concerns with this
16	proposed change to 19.15.8.9A?
17	A. So, this gets into the you know, the note
18	here addition is, you know, the operator should not
19	proceed with any proposed drilling or acquisition
20	until the operator has furnished the required
21	financial assurance.
22	And, again, this is just very difficult,
23	and imagine an operator having a number of wells and
24	trying to manage all this and OCD and trying to manage
25	them managing it and so forth. This is unworkable.

1 with these proposed changes? 2 A. So the proposal would require operators with incomplete blanket financial assurance requirements to 3 provide an additional \$150,000 single-well financial 4 5 assurance for uncovered wells and remove the blanket 6 option. 7 This is unworkable to mandate matching 8 new wells with bonding coverage without accounting for 9 acquisitions and issues updating bonds. 10 This is another instance of the 11 applicants eliminating blanket bond alternatives, 12 which we'll have another expert talking more detail 13 about, but this is concerning. O. Okay. So overall it sounds like there's an 14 15 overarching concern with a one-size-fits-all approach. 16 You discussed the \$150,000 individual financial 17 assurance. Can you explain why this is problematic compared to a risk-based alternative? 18 19 A. So, keep in mind that, you know, as we've 20 had witnesses talk about the \$150,000 looking at data 2.1 from the OCD, but again, you know, as has also been 22 testified, that industry plugs, you know, 95 percent 23 of the wells. And the current costs seem to be based 2.4 off of extreme plugging wells, extremely high ones

that aren't typical things.

25

1	And when you look at this, you know,
2	well plugging may cost \$20,000 or less for some wells.
3	And even for longer horizontal wells, you typically
4	don't plug the horizontal section. And moreover, an
5	operator doing this, we just plug two wells that were
6	unconventional horizontal wells in the Texas Permian,
7	just across the border, and by the time we sold the
8	tubing, cut the casing, sold that, we're able to plug
9	both those two wells for \$4,000.
LO	So, there will always be exceptions.
L1	But, you know, I think that there's a better, more
L2	tailored way to look at this, as opposed to this hard
L3	and fast \$150,000 based on, you know, a few examples.
L4	Q. So, you brought up some other examples in
L5	other jurisdictions on slide 49. Can you walk the
L6	Commission through how the proposed financial
L7	assurance changes compared to some other
L8	jurisdictions?
L9	A. So, again, these are, you know, some, you
20	know, other states, Utah, North Dakota, Colorado. But
21	you know, Texas, it's right across the border over
22	here. So, you know, the railroad Commission maintains
23	a pure blanket bonding schedule, you know, \$25,000 for
24	less than 10 wells, \$50,000 for 11 to 100, \$250,000
25	for more than 100. You know, but, you know, these are

1	things that are not similar to what New Mexico has
2	now. But it varies, you know, kind of by state; all
3	the states aren't the same. They've chosen to do
4	things a little different, but they're also all
5	different.
6	Q. Let's move on to the next slide, which
7	discusses the risks and potential impacts that could
8	occur if these changes are adopted. Can you walk us
9	through your concerns on that slide?
10	A. Sure. There's certainly direct operational
11	impacts of heightened financial assurance requirements
12	on this per-well basis. You know, it's going to be
13	repeated revisions to bonding instruments, which is
14	going to be an ongoing thing, legal review of
15	acquisition documents for bonding, delays in closing
16	deals, higher overhead, and so forth.
17	But it will likely require expanded
18	internal compliance staffing, as I noted earlier. And
19	other unintended consequences, I think, that are going
20	to flow from this, is reduce access to capital for
21	small and mid-size operators, discourage participation
22	from asset acquisition or farming agreements,
23	premature plugging. But even from the small
24	operators, you're going to have large operators that
25	aren't going to be able to take assets and provide

1	them to maybe a smaller operator with lower overhead
2	that could really turn those assets into something
3	great.
4	Q. And you've experienced changes like this and
5	their impacts in other jurisdictions. Can you please,
6	on slide 51, walk the Commission through some of the
7	negative effects that have been experienced by other
8	states as a result of changes such as this?
9	A. Well, certainly the three that I show here,
10	you know, in California, you know, implemented bonding
11	reforms in, you know, '19 or 2020, 2022, led to
12	significant higher bonding obligations per well,
13	triggered delay of permit approvals, transactions,
14	contributed to early abandonment of marginal wells and
15	ultimately a lot of business leaving California.
16	Alaska attempted the per-well bonding
17	increase in 2019. It was ultimately scaled back after
18	industry opposition and concerns about insolvency and
19	stranded assets. I talked to them extensively about
20	this.
21	Colorado did the same thing, and it's,
22	you know, led to operator consolidation, divestment of
23	marginal assets, increased bonding disputes and, and
24	frankly, a lot of operators and companies that just
25	refuse to do business in Colorado now.

1	Q. Now, we told the Commission we're going to
2	provide some recommendations throughout your
3	testimony. On slide 52, can you please walk the
4	Commission through your recommendations?
5	A. Sure. And these, again, we're limited on
6	time, so these are very high level recommendations,
7	but these far-reaching, expansive negative impacts
8	greatly outweigh the incremental benefit the new
9	requirements would provide. In my opinion, they're
10	completely unnecessary, considering the level of
11	financial assurance already provided.
12	New Mexico's current financial assurance
13	requirements, you know, as will be explained, you
14	know, here later, so they'll go into some of the
15	details, other experts from the NMOGA. But we also
16	have the state's reclamation fund and places a
17	backstop, in addition to existing financial assurance,
18	as well as the state's existing TA program, which is
19	going to be talked again.
20	But alternatively, I would suggest
21	engaging stakeholders in technical discussions about
22	the relative risks associated with plugging and
23	abandoning a variety of wells, and to better inform a
24	bigger well instead of this one size fits all on.
25	And that's one of the things I really

1	saw about this, is we tend to be lumping things in
2	these very, very general categories, you know, this
3	number, without considering where the well is, the age
4	of the well, you know, what the potential is, and so
5	forth, and what the new potential technologies and
6	available things are for wells to be of beneficial use
7	today.
8	Q. Thanks, Mr. Arthur. Can you, moving on to
9	slide 53, also go over for the Commission your
10	conclusions for the financial assurance proposal
11	portion this rulemaking?
12	A. So hopefully my testimony is providing a
13	little context for, you know, Mr. Emerick's
14	forthcoming testimony.
15	I've examined other states' financial
16	assurances, you know, and I find WELC's proposal would
17	be unnecessarily rigid and just doesn't incorporate a
18	risk-based framework, which is critical.
19	So for me and based on my experience,
20	the proposed framework fails to reflect operational
21	cost variability of well plugging. In my experience,
22	a one size fits all just doesn't work. Some wells can
23	be plugged very cheaply and not for this huge number
24	that's been provided, and that shouldn't just be
25	proposed across the board.

1	They don't account for the fact that
2	vertical well sections or horizontal wells don't
3	necessarily need to be plugged. This proportionally
4	impacts smaller operators, which I hate. I love small
5	business. I have a small business. And it poses
6	barriers to routine transactions and transferring
7	operators to post excessive bonding amounts and
8	triggering you know, by triggering blanket bond
9	requirements based on margin well percentage that
LO	don't correspond with actual risk.
L1	Q. All right. So let's move on to the next
L2	issues we want the Commission to consider through your
L3	testimony.
L4	Slide 54, let's discuss the proposed
L5	changes to the waste prevention requirements under
L6	19.15.5.9A and how they will affect financial
L7	assurance determinations if adopted as proposed by
L8	applicants.
L9	And maybe if you could start, you know,
20	with what the waste prevention requirements are
21	presently, that'd be helpful. And then we can move on
22	to the next slide.
23	A. So from a very basic perspective of where we
24	are now, it's the state's responsibility, just as it
25	is with every oil and gas producing state, to manage

1	those resources responsibly and not let them go. I
2	mean, that's you know, if you can.
3	And what's been proposed, it removes the
4	compliance buffer for small operators and minor
5	deviations and adds regulatory cross-references to
6	other things like flaring and P&A that there's a lot
7	of things that happen in the oil industry that aren't
8	necessarily, you know, meant to be bad or violations
9	or whatever. So they're trying to manage those
LO	properties.
L1	Q. Okay. And on the next slide, what are your
L2	major concerns regarding this proposed change?
L3	A. So really, you know, the removal of the two
L4	to ten well compliance buffer for smaller operators
L5	and minor deviations make it just impractical and
L6	unrealistic. I've been the EHS director on a contract
L7	basis for probably 30 different oil and gas companies,
L8	and managing compliance can be a challenge, and
L9	sometimes it's very, very minor things that come up.
20	But it creates likely risk of good faith
21	spending. Flaring, technical issues will be treated
22	like just non-compliance when they could be just not
23	significant and something that could be addressed very
24	quickly.
25	Adding cross-references enables OCD to
	Page 208

1	leverage those separate and distinct requirements for
2	other uses not intended when reference rules were
3	promulgated and unfairly penalizes compliant operators
4	if they acquire non-compliant entities. And I've done
5	a lot of stuff where I've helped companies that have
6	bought assets that did have non-compliance, and we
7	spent time getting those assets back into compliance.
8	Q. So, just so I understand, based on what you
9	said, the rule is already in the existing regulations.
10	There's no need to cross-reference it for these
11	purposes?
12	A. Right.
13	Q. Let's move on to slide 57. So what are your
14	recommendations for the Commission with respect to
15	applicant's proposal to amend the waste prevention
16	requirements?
17	A. I truly believe that they should be
18	rejected. But, at the very least, removal of the two
19	to ten well compliance buffer should not be touched.
20	And the cross-references in the proposal with the
21	precise requirements do that and have a grace period.
22	Q. Let's move on to slide 58, which deals with
23	19.15.9, the well operator provisions. Can you give
24	the Commission a brief summary of the changes that
25	applicants propose to OCD's operator registration

1	requirements?
2	And we can move on to the next slide as
3	part of that?
4	A. This gets into the issue of, you know, any
5	operator person within an operating company that,
6	you know, was more than 25 percent owner that had
7	non-compliance or was with a company in non-compliance
8	would be a problem and be impacted.
9	Q. Okay. Next slide. Do you mean the change
10	of operator?
11	A. Yeah. This is a similar sort of thing on
12	the change of operator that, you know, that person
13	with 25 percent interest. So that's the, I would say,
14	crux of this.
15	Q. Thank you. And then the final slide, before
16	we get into the questions, can you please explain
17	slide 61?
18	A. So adding this additional disclosure and
19	certification requirements to operator and change of
20	operator, affirmative certification compliance with
21	all federal and state laws in each state that an
22	operator does business, which NMOGA and IPANM have
23	jointly challenged. NMOGA's expert will talk about
24	the legal expert will talk about that.
25	But mandatory disclosure of whether any

current or past officer or owners with more than
25 percent interest were affiliated with non-compliant
operators, is this an annual certification? This is
tough.
Q. Now, from an operational standpoint, let's
say you're a larger company and trying to do business
in New Mexico and you're required to meet these
requirements, even though you operate in many
different states. From a practical standpoint, what
are some of the challenges that you see?
A. Well, any new operator out of compliance
with federal, state law, you know, in any state that
does business, your know, OCD could deny it, change of
operator, if you were trying to move in.
But it goes through these different
things, and certifications or disclosure, those show
substantial risks that the new operator can't meet
plugging and abandoning requirements, if that's the
case. So this certainly, you know, may vary by size
of operator and so forth. But probably be, you know,
more specific to small and mid-size operators.
But this is tough, because if I own
25 percent of an oil company and the company I have is
a month late in submitting production reports, that's

1	Q. Okay. Now let's move on to slide 63,
2	dealing with prohibiting transfers of non-compliant
3	wells. What is proposed under subsection E of this
4	proposal?
5	A. It would prohibit the transfer of
6	non-compliant wells or facilities, you know, unless
7	they're brought into compliance or a compliance
8	schedule is approved.
9	Q. Okay. Now, it may seem practical to do
10	that, but what are the risks and potential impacts
11	that you see with this proposal as it's proposed on
12	slide 64?
13	A. So, I'll just say, as I noted earlier, I've
14	done a lot of this, but these requirements are
15	unworkable, if not impossible to meet. The proposal
16	would chill executive and investor mobility by
17	deterring otherwise qualified professionals from
18	serving. Requiring affirmative certification of
19	compliance in all states where an operator does
20	business may seem easy, but it's not.
21	Tracking the historical and ongoing
22	compliance status of entities is cumbersome. This
23	patchwork compliance burden where technical violations
24	in one jurisdiction, you know, such as a delayed
25	report or something, you know, non-material could

1	inadvertently trigger consequences that ultimately
2	could drive business away from the State of New Mexico
3	and worse.
4	Q. All right. So I think we've moved along
5	pretty speedily, giving the detail in your direct
6	testimony.
7	Let's move on to slide 65 and 66 so that
8	you can walk the Commission through your overarching
9	recommendations so that the Commission can consider
10	that in this rulemaking?
11	A. So, I have seven high level recommendations.
12	First is to reject the definition of beneficial use
13	and related presumption of no beneficial purposes or
14	beneficial use.
15	Then to decline to add the rigid
16	definition of marginal wells and new marginal well
17	financial assurance requirements.
18	I'd suggest to maintain regulatory
19	flexibility wherever possible; to preserve the use of
20	blanket bonds and avoid stacking requirements; to
21	reject the use of average per-well blanket bond
22	requirements. Encourage adoption of tiered
23	incentive-based structures. And limiting additional
24	reporting and certification burdens.
25	And as we go through these kind of one
	Page 213

1	by one in a little bit more detail, the Commission
2	should decline to add the new definition of
3	"beneficial," you know, due to the unintended
4	consequence it could have with the Commission's state
5	regulations that utilize the term.
6	If in the event the Commission does move
7	forward, the word "speculative" should be removed at a
8	minimum and preferably non-production related uses
9	identified within the definition.
10	The Commission should also decline to
11	add WELC's proposed presumption of no beneficial use.
12	But in the event that the Commission moves forward, I
13	would say, you know, changing this 90-day to or
14	30-day to 90 days, five years, you know, would be
15	better and would align with the ATA.
16	Q. And let's move on to your second
17	recommendation, slide 68, which deals with the
18	definition of marginal wells and the marginal well
19	financial assurance requirements?
20	A. So, I would recommend rejecting WELC's
21	proposal to add a new definition of marginal well. If
22	a definition must be adopted, which in my opinion
23	isn't necessary, then a new marginal well definition
24	and resulting classification must be grounded in an
25	operational and economic context, not abstract

1 thresholds. 2 Applicants proposed definition of marginal well sets thresholds that do not align with 3 reality of how marginal wells operate and their 4 5 prevalence in New Mexico. 6 It appears the new definition of 7 marginal wells would also trigger the proposed 8 heightened \$150,000 per marginal well financial 9 assurance requirement for every well, where operators have more than 15 percent inactive or marginal wells. 10 11 I also recommend the \$150,000 12 one-size-fits-all individual well assurance 13 requirements be rejected, and that a risk-based 14 individual well-bonding currently in place be 15 retained. 16 Q. All right. And moving on to your third 17 recommendation, which is to maintain regulatory 18 flexibility, can you walk us through why that's 19 important? 2.0 A. So using financial assurance as an example, 21 the Commission should preserve the discretion and financial assurance determined by allowing for 22 23 risk-based bonding levels and approaches to consider 24 operative compliance history maybe, well condition, 25 asset maturity, demonstrated plugging costs, things

1	that actually line up to make those numbers real, as
2	opposed to just a flat number.
3	So that flat per-well bonding
4	requirement, such as \$150,000 per well, fails to
5	reflect actual risk or plugging cost variability, and
6	will unnecessarily burden operators that are with
7	viable, well-producing wells.
8	Q. Okay. And your fourth recommendation,
9	recommending preservation of blanket bonds, can you
10	please
11	A. So the Commission should affirm that blanket
12	financial assurance satisfies applicable obligations
13	for covered wells, avoid rules that outright or
14	effectively eliminate that option, and avoid rules
15	that require simultaneous, single-well and blanket
16	bonds unless there is demonstrated case-specific basis
17	to require a vote.
18	Q. Okay. And your fifth recommendation to
19	reject the use of average per well, blanket bonds.
20	Can you walk through that?
21	A. O the proposal should require blanket
22	bonding based on or should the proposal to
23	require blanket bonding based on an average of
24	\$150,000 per well, introduces target compliance
25	standards that are difficult to administrate or audit

1 or enforce. 2 It's going to create confusion and 3 generate unintended consequences for acquisitions, mergers and internal compliance. I really think the 4 5 Commission should, instead, the fixed blanket bonding 6 tiers that align with industry norms and would simplify enforcement. 8 O. Your sixth recommendation regarding tiered 9 and incentive-based structures, can you please explain that? 10 11 A. So, New Mexico could adopt a tiered-based 12 bonding structure that provides reduced financial 13 assurance obligations for operators who maintain, for instance, strong compliance records, reduce inactive 14 15 well counts, perhaps actively participate in orphan 16 wall reduction efforts. 17 It's already being used in some states. And I agree orphan walls are an issue that we need to 18 address, but, you know, let's look at this in a 19 20 reasonable manner. 2.1 Q. And your final direct recommendation 22 limiting additional reporting and certifications, can you please explain that to the Commission? 23 2.4 A. So the proposed new registration and ownership certification requirements are overly broad, 25

1	likely unworkable in practice and risk discouraging
2	executive mobility and capital investment. Any
3	ownership-based disclosure should be limited to
4	current control parties with material decision-making
5	authority and based on known verifiable records.
6	So I know you can you know, you can
7	go to state websites or whatever and look to see if
8	somebody has compliance issues or not, but it's not
9	that easy.
10	Q. And that completes your direct testimony.
11	I'd like to move on to the rebuttal testimony with the
12	time we have left, starting with slide 75.
13	Can you please walk us through your
14	overarching concerns with the applicant's application?
15	A. So, one, analysis of what the legislative
16	finance committee report actually states and
17	recommends, as compared to the applicant's
18	characterization, is an issue I have. The applicant's
19	mischaracterized marginal temporarily abandoned and
20	orphan wells as high risk and difficult to manage with
21	no future benefit.
22	And third, the applicant's proposals
23	ignore oil field innovation.
24	Q. Now let's walk through what the legislative
25	finance committee report actually says and recommends.

1	What discrepancies do you see between what the LFC
2	report says versus what the applicant says it says?
3	A. Well, this is what I appreciate when you
4	encourage everyone to read that report from front to
5	back.
6	But the LFC report recommends a lower
7	threshold for low-producing wells. And the applicants
8	proposal under the new definition of marginal well,
9	proposes the report acknowledges the need for
10	flexibility in assessing future potential of wells.
11	It confirms the lack of authority to make marginal
12	well financial assurance category.
13	The report confirms the lack of
14	authority to deny well transfers if determined the
15	buyer is unlikely to fulfill plugging, abandonment and
16	reclamation obligations. The report recommends a
17	narrower definition of orphan wells than applied and
18	recommended by the applicant and agency witnesses.
19	And the LFC report narrowly defines a
20	narrower definition of orphan well undermines
21	applicant's reliance on OCD's master orphan well list,
22	which captures wells beyond those the state has
23	pursued or obtained plugging authority for.
24	Q. Okay. Next slide, dealing with applicant's
25	characterization. How did applicants mischaracterize

1	marginal, temporarily abandoned and orphan wells as
2	high risk and difficult to manage with no future
3	benefit?
4	A. Well, marginal inactive wells tend to be low
5	risk and can be managed without environmental
6	incident. So, temporarily abandoned wells can be
7	easily reactivated and lower risk than active
8	producing wells. They don't have flow pumps,
9	everything going on.
10	Marginal, temporarily abandoned and
11	inactive wells present future benefit beyond
12	production or injection.
13	Q. And on your next slide, you know, oil field
14	innovation?
15	A. So these are just some of the things. You
16	know, we've talked about water flooding and EOR, but
17	CO2 huff-and-puff projects, stimulating existing wells,
18	carbon capture and sequestration, and so much more.
19	Q. Okay. Now let's talk about some of the
20	issues you have with applicant and OCD's position that
21	current financial assurance requirements are
22	inadequate.
23	What other factors do you think were
24	ignored in their testimony, and how can you lay that
25	out for the Commission today?

1	A. If you look at the history and what's
2	happening, I believe blanket bonds function as
3	intended. Industry can plan, abandon, remediate wells
4	faster and cheaper than OCD, undermining applicant's
5	and agency's reliance on LFC averages.
6	And that's not to say that industry is
7	not going to have wells that are going to be super
8	expensive to plug and remediate, too, but this is in
9	general. And OCD often winds up taking the worst of
10	the worst.
11	Operators should not be held to a
12	standard or accountable to the public for cost
13	overruns until OCD's procurement system is remediated.
14	This was noted. You know, and I'd say across the
15	board, even throughout different states, but analysis
16	of reclamation cost claims and existing SLO lease
17	surface improvement damaged bond requirements, you
18	know, we do a lot of these, but if they can vary
19	dramatically.
20	The reclamation fund is ignored, and
21	it's there for a reason. It should be used. Multiple
22	statewide economic and policy consequences will flow
23	from the proposed changes. Financial assurance
24	increases actually create the risk of premature
25	plugging. So this is premature plugging of many wells

1	that are viable and hold value for the state.
2	Q. Okay. And moving on to slide 80 with your
3	recommendations for alternatives the Commission might
4	consider. Can you walk us through some additional
5	financial assurance recommendations for the
6	Commission?
7	A. So it would encourage a phased or risk-based
8	assurance phased or risk-based assurance increases,
9	flexibility tied to well risk and operator compliance
LO	history. So that was one of the things that I saw
L1	really ignored, is, you know, how are we defining the
L2	risk of these wells, other than they're not producing
L3	or they're marginal.
L4	Refining targeted enforcement
L5	mechanisms, instead of discarding the tools that they
L6	already have. Enhanced reporting or certification for
L7	inactive wells only, using reclamation fund as
L8	designed.
L9	I think there's been bipartisan support
20	has been shown for relying on proven value of reserves
21	and other things. So there's a lot that should be
22	considered here.
23	Q. Let's move on to the plugging and
24	abandonment analysis in your recommendation. What
25	recommendation and responses would you like to leave
	Page 222

1	the Commission with?
2	A. So, just to recognize that shortening
3	compliance windows and converting periods of
4	inactivity into near automatic plugging or formal
5	temporary abandonment filings removes operational
6	flexibility.
7	So when you start, you know, sequence,
8	re-completions, coordinating and gathering,
9	compression, all these different things that can come
10	into play tend to get ignored. And, you know,
11	plugging not tied to actual mechanical or
12	wall-specific risks showing a need to plug undermines,
13	you know, the act and conservation mandates by
14	foreclosing otherwise prudent, near-term reactivation
15	pass and pad level optimization. So, you know, it's
16	going to result in plugging viable wells.
17	Q. Okay. And with respect to approved
18	temporary abandonment and the definitional changes
19	proposed, how would those changes affect P&A, starting
20	with the changes to the approved temporary abandonment
21	definition?
22	A. I would reject OCD's assertion that the
23	proposed definition expansion simply provides clarity.
24	That framing omits practical effect of collapsing
25	distinct concepts into a single defined status

1 tethered to compliance. As written, the definition would allow 2 3 temporarily abandonment exploration to be equated with broad non-compliance and then cascade into plugging 4 5 obligations. That's not clarity so much as a 6 definition driven mandate that automatically converts routine compliance lapses into plugging obligations. 8 So where consistency is needed across 9 parts, harmonize reference without importing new 10 outcome determinative labels. 11 Q. Okay. And then on your next slide, you 12 discuss expired temporary abandonment. What about 13 those changes to the expired TA definition? 14 A. Well, OCD, again, suggests that this 15 amendment merely codifies an administrative shorthand. 16 But the phrase "no longer complies" is vague and could 17 encompass anything from minor reporting delays to mechanical integrity questions. So trivial to 18 significant, this would create an automatic 19 reclassification of wells based on incidental or 20 2.1 easily correctable issues leading to arbitrary 22 enforcement. 23 And OCD already administrates 2.4 temporarily abandonment through the code. By tying 25 expiration to broad non-compliance, the definition

Т	would function as an overbroad definitional trigger,
2	which it could automatically force premature plugging
3	again on wells that remain mechanically sound and have
4	future development potential.
5	Q. Okay. Now, on your next slide, you have a
6	recommendation with respect to marginal well. Can you
7	walk the Commission through that, please?
8	A. So, again, adding the definition of marginal
9	well, you know, based on my experience, you know, the
10	proposed definition of marginal well would capture
11	production in productive and viable wells and
12	misclassify them. So many wells that fall below the
13	threshold there serve critical operational rules, like
14	lease retention, reservoir management, and so forth,
15	as we've noted.
16	The LFC report recommends that OCC adopt
17	a definition of low-producing wells producing less
18	than 750 BOE annually or about 2 BOE per day. So for
19	these reasons outlined in my direct testimony, the
20	term "marginal" should not be defined due to the
21	unforeseen and widespread consequences that modifying
22	the term might have.
23	But if the definition must be assigned,
24	I believe at least the LFC report's recommendation
25	threshold of low-producing should be adopted if deemed
	Page 225

1	absolutely necessary. And again, I don't think it's
2	necessary.
3	Q. Thank you. We're almost done with your
4	slides. But slide 85 concerning the tying of waste
5	prevention requirements to the beneficial and inactive
6	well list, were there any notes on how the proposals
7	were interconnected and related that you want to
8	highlight for the Commission as it relates to your
9	overarching concerns with waste?
L O	A. So the OCD reports that change needed to be
L1	consistent with the changes proposed. You know, by
L2	tying this directly to the new presumptions of no
L3	beneficial use, you know, under 19.15.25.9, OCD is
L4	effectively hard-wiring flawed thresholds and
L5	procedural determinations into an inactive well
L6	framework. The Commission should reject the proposed
L7	amendments as drafted.
L8	If an inactive well list is to be
L9	maintained, wells should be added only after
20	case-by-case evaluation of risk and beneficial use,
21	not automatic consequences of failing arbitrary
22	production or injection levels.
23	At a minimum, the rule should allow
24	operators to demonstrate beneficial use before
25	production volumes and should preserve OCD's
	Page 226

1 discretion. 2 So linking compliance to registration and financial assurance approvals, operators who fall 3 even temporarily out of compliance with plugging or 4 5 flaring requirements could be barred from registering 6 or transferring wells or from releasing assurance. 7 Faced with such uncertainty, and this is 8 significant when I say uncertainty, many operators 9 will choose to plug wells rather than risk regulatory deadlocks or compliance or enforcement. 10 11 Q. And that also promotes waste, correct? 12 A. Absolutely. 13 Q. All right. So what other the proposals create the risk of waste via premature plugging, 14 15 according to slide 86 of your exhibits? 16 A. So, at a high level here, the expanded 17 definition of marginal and inactive wells, the shortened compliance window under 19.15.25, 90 days to 18 30 days after 12 months, elimination of risk-based 19 20 individual well assurance requirements and blanket 2.1 bonding alternatives, going to this \$150,000 per well 22 bond, market realities of the surety industry, and 23 we'll have an expert talk about this, but even having 2.4 that industry do this -- and I'm not, you know, a

Page 227

surety expert, but I've had to get a lot of bonding

25

1	for a lot of different operators. And then reducing
2	the current 15-month timeframe for a well in
3	inactivity to 13-month inactivity, those are those
4	general things that I'm concerned with.
5	Q. Okay. And the final slide of your rebuttal.
6	What are your closing remarks and conclusions for the
7	Commission, Mr. Arthur?
8	A. And I've been in the regulatory environment
9	since the 1980s. I've developed federal regulations.
10	I've helped states with their regulations in a variety
11	of cases. And, you know, what concerns me when I look
12	at some of this is, the longest producing well in
13	America is in Pennsylvania, you know, if that well was
14	in New Mexico, it would have to get plugged.
15	The first well drilled in Tulsa,
16	Oklahoma, was drilled in 1901. It's still produces
17	today. It's produced over a million barrels of oil,
18	produces about a quarter to half a barrel a day. And
19	they're able to do that because the guy who owns the
20	well, it's on his ranch, he walks out about 100 yards
21	every day and flips the pump on for about an hour.
22	So there's a variety of different things
23	where every operator isn't the same, every operator
24	isn't a shell or Exxon or Oxy. There's a variety of
25	these across the board, and I hope we look at that and

do that.

2.1

2.4

And I notice I also have heard multiple times the term "bad actors" use. And I 100 percent agree. I do a lot of expert work for the Securities and Exchange Commission on fraud cases and so forth. So I've worked with the SEC to go after bad actors. But it's also the responsibility for -- the OCD already has regulations to deal with those bad actors and could take those into hand with the regulations that they have.

So I would just say don't unnecessarily punish the small operators, don't just assume because you have marginal wells or inactive wells that those necessarily are risky. They're all not like that, those wells that the OCD expert that was plugging looked at. So they're all very different. They were drilled in different times, with different rules and so forth.

And the potential that we have going forward is significant, just like the example that Oxy had. And we don't have these one-size-fits-all decline curves that you can do for all the wells in New Mexico and apply that across the board. They're all different. You re-complete and the curves change. And so that hold-back window can change 50 times over

1	life of a well.
2	MR. SUAZO: Madam Hearing Officer, we do
3	have just a handful of surrebuttal slides to go over.
4	I don's know if you want us to proceed or if you want
5	us to
6	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: I think proceeding is
7	good.
8	MR. SUAZO: Give us just a second to get
9	that up.
LO	BY MR. SUAZO:
L1	Q. All right. Mr. Arthur, you had some
L2	comments and response to the testimony from applicants
L3	and OCD in this proceeding that you wanted to discuss
L4	in surrebuttal, correct?
L5	A. Yes. So this first one kind of related to a
L6	comment that Mr. Purvis made, you know, about the West
L7	Texas well, the zombie well. Our firm is actually
L8	doing work for the landowner of that zombie well.
L9	But the subject well and multiple wells
20	in that area were plugged back in the 1950s.
21	Technology was vastly different, regulations were very
22	different. I worked at EPA, you know, when we
23	developed the Safe Drinking Water Act amendments of
24	the U.S. UIC program to develop what an underground
25	source of drinking water is. That didn't happen

1 until, you know, the '80s. 2 You know, so you look at the things that 3 were done here, people plugged wells as was the industry standard, as maybe if a state had a plugging 4 5 regulation that they would do that by. But they 6 certainly didn't anticipate, you know, the fracking boom or injection or all these different things that 8 could happen in the future. 9 So those subject wells were plugged back in the '50s. Regulations were very different. 10 11 Lumping old historic wells and standards into newer 12 well -- into, you know, categories with far newer 13 wells and standards is just wrong and inapplicable. 14 So claims that plugging costs have 15 increased was another thing that Mr. Purvis noted. 16 And I'll say that I'm currently vice president of 17 plugging operations for CSR Services, which is a 18 plugging company. I was part of another one in the 19 mid-continent. But what I'm seeing from that is, you know, pluggers are -- you know, in some areas, costs 20 21 are going up, and some areas, costs are going down. 22 But a lot of it depends on the well and if you're 23 plugging wells in a forest or next to a house or that 24 is 100 years old or in a corrosive environment. 2.5 But what I will say is one large

1	mid-continent plugging company plugged last year, this
2	would have been 2024, about 1,000, 1200 wells at an
3	average cost of about \$10,000 per well or under that.
4	Q. And on your next slide, you discuss options
5	that are alternatives to plugging that are available
6	for these types of wells. Can you walk us through
7	that, please?
8	A. So this is this is one example, but
9	certainly there's, you know, state and federally
10	funded plugging reclamation programs, industry groups,
11	you know, private sector incentives.
12	But, you know, returning production or
13	to re-complete wells for improved production so,
14	for instance, one of the projects that I've been
15	working on for last several years is short radius
16	horizontal redevelopment of wells. So in this one
17	case, we're taking wells that were initially
18	discovered and drilled from about 1905 to about 1925,
19	where production had fallen, many of them were
20	temporarily abandoned.
21	We went in with the operator and started
22	doing horizontal re-completions. Productions for the
23	producing wells went from about one barrel oil a day
24	or less to about 20 barrels of oil a day. That's been
25	maintained. And as that operator gains money from

that production, they do another well that they do the short radius horizontal redevelopment.

2.4

And so far they've done about 50 wells.

And that's been over the last four years. But some of these wells had been shut in, you know, we're talking about six or eight years, I mean, decades. So this is significant.

And I'll just say that if you look at short radius horizontals and the way these are being done, it's significant. But you look at -- and I hate to go on here, but if you look at a lot of reservoirs, when we look at the amount of reserves that we get out of those wells through primary production, or even secondary, it's very small.

And moreover, what we saw in this particular area with this operator, I'm helping and now we're doing this in a number of places, but an operator will go in and frac a well that maybe is a relatively shallow well and think that the frac, you know, like modern frac, it's going out horizontally, when, in fact, it's not going that far horizontally, it's mostly going up, you know, vertically, and they're missing out on all these other reserves away from the well board. And things like the short radius horizontals let them get out to that oil that could be

1 otherwise produced. 2 And if you didn't do this, those reserves would be lost forever. They wouldn't have 3 known it. Did they have to take a chance to see if 4 this would work? Yes. Is that speculative? Not by my term. Maybe by one of the other experts, but 6 certainly not by me. 8 And there's a lot of other -- this is 9 one example of many things that we're seeing, 10 including, you know, chemical additives and so forth, 11 you know, for unconventional wells that we've seen 12 take production, you know, more than double, you know, 13 by just the way they stimulate a well. 14 Q. All right. And moving on to your next 15 slide, which I think you wanted to address some of 16 WELC's technical expert's testimony, Mr. Alexander. What would you like to note for the Commission with 17 18 respect to his testimony? 19 A. So Mr. Alexander essentially dismissed the 20 fracking boom, and I thought that was shocking. While 2.1 Mr. Alexander was at Southwestern Energy, I was a 22 consultant to Southwestern Energy and worked with 23 I didn't work directly with him, but a lot of them. 2.4 people around him. 25 But I was able to argue in

1	Pennsylvania's Supreme Court on a case noting that
2	hydraulic fracturing had been around since the early
3	1900s. And it has. But that early hydraulic
4	fracturing was using you know, dropping torpedoes
5	with nitroglycerin in them to frac a well on it. And
6	what you got was very near wellbore fracking.
7	And then around 2010, when horizontal
8	wells were being fracked in areas like the Bakken or
9	the Barnett, they were single-stage frac jobs with not
10	the volumes that we use now, not multi-stage frac,
11	none of that. The way we do it, the process, the
12	sand, all that is very different.
13	But if you look at before the fracking
14	boom, we were arguing this thing, and this was papers
15	published all over the place, about peak oil. And the
16	thought was, is that in the well, we have reached the
17	point of peak oil. So oil had peaked, we were going
18	to start on the decline, it was going to run out and
19	we were going to be out of oil.
20	And as a result of the fracking boom,
21	that resulted in, you know, the shale revolution,
22	which was the biggest oil boom in our history.
23	So to dismiss that or to say, you know,
24	that there was no fracking boom and then fracking was
25	the same, now I can give you even more examples.

1	One, when we started doing the first
2	well, a horizontal well, attempting to frac in the
3	Bakken, we met with Halliburton and one of our
4	clients. And we said we wanted to do a large fracking
5	job on a horizontal well. Halliburton told us it was
6	technically infeasible and would cost a billion
7	dollars. A year later, we fracked that well with
8	Halliburton and they modified, you know, pumps and
9	stuff onsite, and it worked.
10	So that use of a rigid definition like
11	"speculative" also in the context is there's no more
12	future potential for older conventional wells in
13	today's age, you know. Technology is advancing at
14	exponential pace with AI data centers and microgrids
15	and the need for gas. I mean, what I've told people
16	and I've seen in much of the press and people doing
17	things is we need every molecule of energy that we can
18	get.
19	If the industry didn't take risks and
20	wouldn't be somewhat speculative, there wouldn't be an
21	oil and gas in the well today. There wouldn't.
22	Assumptions presented are highly
23	generalized and lack real well credibility. So
24	that's I'm just trying to say, like, if we're going
25	to talk about this stuff, let's be honest and dig into

1 the details and not use these generalities. 2 Q. Your last slide, Mr. Arthur. I think you 3 want to touch on kind of the potential for technology building on what she just said. Can you please 4 5 quickly go over this slide, surrebuttal testimony? 6 A. Sure. So, unfortunately the creativity of 7 the energy industry and technology advancements are 8 often overlooked, just like they were for the fracking 9 boom. But as I noted before the fracking boom, the 10 key predictions were the oil production had peaked 11 and, you know, we're going to have to find something 12 Then curiosity, creativity and technology 13 advancements led to one of the biggest oil and gas 14 booms in history. 15 It's common for professionals, 16 especially university types and so forth, to assess economics based on only limited data that primarily 17 18 relies on selective history and general data, without 19 considering how much technology has advanced or actual 20 details. 2.1 So failing to account for creative alternatives to the norm through things like applying 22 technology advancements can yield findings that are 23 24 simply misleading and short-sighted. 25 MR. SUAZO: All right. Mr. Arthur, thank Page 237

1	you so much for your testimony today.
2	Madam Hearing Officer, that concludes
3	our direct rebuttal and surrebuttal. At this time,
4	NMOGA would move to admit the direct testimony of
5	Mr. Arthur, its Appendix A, Mr. Arthur's rebuttal
6	testimony and its Appendix A. The two demonstrative
7	exhibits used for the summary of his direct
8	examination and surrebuttal testimony to the record.
9	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: I'll pause for a
10	moment in the event there are objections.
11	They're admitted.
12	MR. SUAZO: Thank you.
13	(Admitted: NMOGA Arthur Direct
14	Testimony/Appendix A, Rebuttal
15	Testimony/Appendix A.)
16	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: We will need a break
17	before public comment. So let's come back at 10 of
18	4:00.
19	(Recess held from 3:35 to 4:00 p.m.)
20	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: We are on day seven
21	of the hearing in OCC 24683 regarding well plugging
22	and financial assurance.
23	We've reached another public comment
24	session. We have public commenters in the room and
25	public commenters online.

1	Just a few things about public comments.
2	One is, I will ask you to state and spell your first
3	and last name. I will ask you, pursuant to the
4	Commission rules, whether you swear or affirm to tell
5	the truth.
6	And I will ask you to keep your oral
7	comments to three minutes. If you have more to say
8	than that, please submit your written public comment
9	to Sheila Apodaca, there at the back of the room.
10	Her e-mail address is in the public notice.
11	Let's see. Doug Meiklejohn, I saw you
12	come into the room first. If you would join us up
13	here at the witness stand.
14	Well, would you state and spell your
15	first and last name.
16	MR. MEIKLEJOHN: Thank you. First name is
17	Douglas, D-O-U-G-L-A-S. Last name is Meiklejohn, M,
18	as in Mary, E-I-K-L-E-J-O-H-N. That's all one word.
19	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you. Do you
20	swear or affirm to tell the truth?
21	MR. MEIKLEJOHN: Yes.
22	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: I'll start your time.
23	MR. MEIKLEJOHN: Thank you, Madam Hearing
24	Officer.
25	Commissioners, I am a water quality and
	Page 239

1	land restoration advocate for Conservation Voters
2	New Mexico. Conservation Voters urges you to adopt
3	the proposed revisions to your regulations governing
4	the posting of financial assurances for oil and gas
5	wells.
6	First, you have a responsibility to
7	protect the residents of New Mexico and the state's
8	resources by requiring the posting of adequate
9	financial assurances by oil and gas operators.
10	Second, fundamental fairness demands
11	that if an entity makes money drilling for oil and
12	gas in New Mexico, that entity should have to pay any
13	cleanup cost required after the drilling is finished.
14	Third, the current regulations do not
15	provide that required protection. In the last
16	approximately five years, about \$100 billion in
17	public money, in state and federal funds, has been
18	used to clean up abandoned oil and gas wells.
19	Moreover, abandoned wells pose serious
20	threats to New Mexico's groundwater, which is the
21	source of drinking water for about 80 percent of the
22	residents of New Mexico.
23	For these reasons and the reasons
24	provided by the petitioners and their witnesses,
25	Conservation Voters New Mexico urges you to adopt the

1	proposed revisions to Section 19.15.8 New Mexico
2	Administrative Code.
3	Thank you for your consideration.
4	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you,
5	Mr. Meiklejohn.
6	The other person in the room is Signa
7	Larralde. If you would state and spell your first
8	and last name.
9	Ms. Larralde: Sure, my first name is Signa,
10	S-I-G-N-A. Last name is Larralde, L-A-R-R-A-L-D-E.
11	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you.
12	Do swear or affirm to tell the truth?
13	Ms. Larralde: I do.
14	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: I'll start your time.
15	Ms. Larralde: Good afternoon, oil and gas
16	Commissioners. My name is Signa Larralde. I'm a
17	retired archaeologist. I'm speaking on my own behalf
18	in strong support of the proposed bonding rule
19	changes.
20	Although New Mexico has already spent
21	over \$100 million in state and federal public funds
22	to clean up orphaned and abandoned wells, there are
23	still over 700 wells to be cleaned up. An additional
24	4,400 wells are expected to be added to the list in
25	the near future.

Cleanup costs for existing wells, that's the current state of wells needing mitigation, are estimated at \$1.6 billion. And that doesn't count to God only knows how many future wells will be added to the list if the proposed rule is not adopted. These figures show why changes in the bonding rules are necessary.

2.5

in this mess. That was the oil and gas industry. I have spent considerable time in both the Permian Basin oil fields and the oil fields of Northwestern New Mexico. And I've seen these sites firsthand. This abandoned industrial waste is not only a health hazard for rural and tribal communities and a blight on the landscape, it's a huge cost that industry should bear as the responsible party.

According to a recent statewide poll, nearly nine in ten New Mexicans agree, as well as the State Land Office and the Oil and Gas Division. The responsible party, be it a small independent operator or a large corporation, needs to supply adequate bonds upfront for plugging every well they intend to drill, no exceptions. After all, these are the parties that reap the profits from oil and gas extraction.

1	I urge you to vote to adopt the stronger
2	rules on oil and gas bonding in their entirety.
3	Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this
4	important rule change.
5	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you,
6	Ms. Larralde.
7	As Sheila, can you pull up Julia
8	Whipple?
9	Ms. Whipple, would you state and spell
10	your first and last name, please.
11	MS. WHIPPLE: Julia Whipple, J-U-L-I-A,
12	W-H-I-P-P-L-E.
13	MS. FEMALE: Do swear or affirm to tell the
14	truth?
15	MS. WHIPPLE: Yes.
16	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: All right, I'll start
17	your time.
18	MS. WHIPPLE: Thank you. My name is Julie
19	Whipple, and I grew up in San Diego, California. I
20	spent 12 years in Sierra Vista, Arizona. And I've
21	lived the last 16 years here in Artesia, New Mexico.
22	While living in Artesia, my family has
23	enjoyed the natural wonders here in the Southeastern
24	New Mexico area, to include the Pecos River, Sitting
25	Bull Falls, and Carlsbad Caverns.

1	I earned a bachelor of arts degree in
2	multiple subjects from the University of Redlands in
3	California, and I've taught all ages from early
4	intervention with CARC, to K through 5 classroom
5	teaching, tutoring all ages, college-level teaching
6	for seven years.
7	Here in Artesia, I ran our local Meals
8	on Wheels program. The non-profit program is not
9	only blessed with financial support from local oil
10	and gas companies, but many employees spent their
11	lunch breaks helping deliver meals. The Artesia
12	Meals on Wheels program runs entirely on donations
13	and volunteers deliver all the meals. Currently, I
14	work in real estate.
15	Although no one in my family currently
16	works in the oil and gas industry, we have all
17	enjoyed the many benefits of living in this area and
18	the support local oil companies have given our
19	community. Four of my 12 children have benefited
20	from scholarships in support of educational and
21	recreational programs through generous donations from
22	local oil and gas companies. I have one daughter who
23	graduated from UNM with zero debt.
24	The oil and gas money produced here in
25	southern New Mexico supports the entire state.

1	Overregulation of the industry will cause the economy
2	and Artesia to collapse. In the time I've lived here
3	I've had good friends move to Texas because the
4	companies they work for have moved their
5	headquarters. Our largest building here in town
6	nearly emptied when EOG moved their main operations
7	to Texas.
8	If the oil and gas industry in
9	New Mexico collapses due to over regulation, our
10	small city, along with many other rural economies in
11	southern New Mexico will be devastated. Many will
12	lose their jobs and income even if they aren't
13	working in the industry. The generous companies in
14	our area sponsor many community events and give our
15	city great support.
16	I ask you to consider me and families
17	like mine when you decide on the future and the
18	regulations of the oil and gas industry. Thank you
19	for your time.
20	MS. FEMALE: Thank you, Ms. Whipple.
21	We have Pauline Hovey. Ms. Hovey, can
22	you unmute yourself.
23	MS. HOVEY: Yes. My name is Pauline Hovey.
24	I'm a citizen
25	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: I'm sorry. Hold on
	Page 245
	1456 215

1	one second. I have to ask you to spell your first
2	and last name.
3	MS. HOVEY: Pauline, P-A-U-L-I-N-E. My last
4	name is Hovey, H-O-V, as in Victor, E-Y.
5	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: And you swear or
6	affirm to tell the truth?
7	MS. HOVEY: I do.
8	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: I'll start your time.
9	MS. HOVEY: Okay. Thank you.
10	So my name is Pauline Hovey. I'm a
11	citizen, resident and taxpayer here in New Mexico. I
12	also happen to be a Christian who cares for our land
13	and our neighbors. And I know that for the most
14	part, we New Mexicans are not wealthy people. Many
15	of my fellow New Mexicans live on limited incomes,
16	barely affording to pay their monthly bills.
17	For me, it's unconscionable and
18	unethical that we, the taxpayers, would bear the
19	brunt of cleaning up after oil and gas corporations
20	that profit immensely from drilling in our state. I
21	believe it's absolutely necessary that we require
22	these companies not only clean up after themselves,
23	but also handle any additional costly messes and
24	ensure that their projects will not create any
25	negative consequences, such as pollution and

1	environmental hazards to our state. To me, that's
2	just common sense, not asking for overregulation, but
3	that they take up their responsibility.
4	In the interest of all New Mexicans, I'm
5	urging you to please modernize and increase the
6	bonding insurance and cleanup rules to require that
7	all oil and gas companies who do business in our
8	state step up and be responsible for their actions
9	that adversely affect our health, our financial
10	situation, our land and our natural resources.
11	Please do not back down on this. Don't
12	let them walk away from any harm or messes they
13	create. Let's increase the bonding insurance and
14	let's take care of all New Mexico and all of
15	New Mexicans. Thank you.
16	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you, Ms. Hovey.
17	Do we have Ava Curtis.
18	MS. CURTIS: Yes.
19	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Hello. Would you
20	spell your first and last name?
21	MS. CURTIS: So that's going to be A-V-A and
22	then C-U-R-T-I-S.
23	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Do swear or affirm to
24	tell the truth?
25	MS. CURTIS: I do.

1	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: I'll start your time.
2	MS. CURTIS: Thank you.
3	Good afternoon, Chair, Commissioners.
4	My name is Ava Curtis. I'm speaking today on behalf
5	of myself as a resident of Albuquerque and on behalf
6	of the Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club as a
7	member in strong support of the proposed bonding rule
8	changes.
9	Right now, oil and gas corporations can
LO	drill dozens or even hundreds of wells in New Mexico
L1	while posting bonds that cover only a fraction of the
L2	cost. The legislative finance committee found
L3	plugging to cost an average of over \$160,000 per well
L4	and some costing as much as \$700,000 per well.
L5	Because of the outdated bonding rules,
L6	the public is left paying to plug wells to prevent
L7	them from releasing toxins into the air and water.
L8	In the last five years, over \$100 million in public
L9	funds, state and federal, have been spent to clean up
20	abandoned wells. Simply put, this is not the
21	responsibility of the New Mexico taxpayers.
22	We still face up to \$1.6 billion in
23	future cleanup costs. Consider what \$1.6 billion
24	could provide for New Mexicans and for our
25	communities.

1	These abandoned wells don't just create
2	financial risks. They're dangerous. The methane and
3	toxins leak into the air and into our groundwater,
4	harming wildlife and public health, especially in
5	rural and tribal communities.
6	Air quality is critical to our health.
7	Air pollution harms us all, not just leading to
8	respiratory problems, but other less commonly
9	associated problems with air pollution, including
10	neurological disease.
11	New Mexicans deserve safe, clean air,
12	and we don't deserve to be left with a massive \$1.6
13	billion cleanup bill when these oil and gas companies
14	make billions of dollars every year.
15	These rule updates are a chance to
16	finally align policy with common sense. Please vote
17	to adopt stronger bonding measures. Let's protect
18	our air, water and wallets and make sure that no one
19	gets to profit off of New Mexico while leaving the
20	taxpayers to clean up their mess. Thank you.
21	MS. HOVEY: Thank you, Ms. Curtis.
22	Is there anyone else on the platform who
23	would like to offer public comment? I see Alicia.
24	Can you unmute yourself? Alicia. It might help to
25	press control-shift-M to unmute.

All right. Is there anyone else on the
platform who would like to offer public comment
during this session? Our next session is 9:00 a.m.
tomorrow morning.
Alicia, let me encourage you to work on
unmuting and to join us either at 9:00 o'clock.
MS. BOMHOFF: I think I did. All right. I
don't know how. I think I did command-shift-M or
something. Anyway, I was trying everything I could
just because I'm here, I've been listening all day,
and I just wanted to throw in my two cents. After
listening to all the experts, I think that's really
all I have to offer, is two cents.
HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Hold on, hold on. I
need to spell your first and last name for the
transcript.
MS. BOMHOFF: It's Alicia, A-L-I-C-I-A. And
my last name is Bomhoff, B, as in boy, O-M-H-O-F-F.
HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Do swear or affirm to
tell the truth?
MS. BOMHOFF: Yes.
HEARING OFFICER ORTH: All right. Thank
you. I'll start your time.
MS. BOMHOFF: I'm listening to this on the
heels of listening to days of water quality
Page 250

1	Commission testing Zoom meetings, about the
2	governor's recent decision to let the oil and gas
3	companies dump fracked water in New Mexico's
4	waterways. And I've been kind of sick about that
5	ever since.
6	And this comes on the heels of that and
7	contributes to it, especially since, you know, again,
8	really what we're looking at is the health of the
9	residents of the state of New Mexico ultimately.
10	And even though Mr. Wallace [sic] says
11	that, you know, you can't tell if his well is going
12	to cost \$150,000 or \$1,000, he does admit that the
13	oil and gas industry has had the largest boom in
14	history recently, with all of its drilling and
15	fracking.
16	And, you know, Biden said no more fossil
17	fuels and yet went ahead and made us the largest
18	producer of fossil fuels on the plant. On the
19	planet.
20	So we are now heating Europe, and Trump
21	wants to heat India, and we're cooking ourselves in
22	the process. And Mr. Wallace, in spite of this, you
23	know, wonderful boom, this economic boom, doesn't
24	make any mention of the environmental costs of this
25	boom in fracking and oil production. It's not hard
	Page 251

1 to see that every year it gets hotter and hotter. 2 And, you know, my 84-year-old aunt's air conditioner just broke. It's \$6,500 to replace. 3 Luckily, I live in Taos, New Mexico, where I don't 4 need an air conditioner, and I live off the grid and sun heats my house. I don't actually use oil, 6 although I do use a little bit of propane for my 8 stove. 9 But, I mean, we live in a solar state, and there really is no reason for us to continue 10 11 polluting at this rate when New Mexicans' health is 12 really at stake. And I think we learned during 13 COVID, you have to put health before wealth. And just because the oil industry might sponsor some 14 15 events, does not outweigh them taxing people for the 16 cleanup that they've already caused that needs to be 17 done. And what about the future deterioration of our climate, our water, and the things that we really 18 19 rely on to make our lives beautiful? And I'm just disgusted with the oil and 20 21 gas industry not being held accountable. And, you know, Mr. Wallace was kind of convincing. You don't 22 want to charge people too much and discourage 23 24 business. Well, if they've had this giant boom, I 25 think they can afford to clean up after themselves.

1	Or, like what he mentioned in Colorado, go somewhere
2	else. Keep ruining Texas. It's already pretty bad.
3	Nobody cares.
4	They all want to leave Texas and come to
5	New Mexico. Why? Because New Mexico is still nice.
6	But if you kind of ruin one state after another,
7	especially one that could be completely solar, it's a
8	sad, sad thing that's happening. So I just wanted to
9	add that two cents, and thank you for listening. And
LO	I just am hopeful for a future where we really do go
L1	solar in New Mexico and we do discourage pollution of
L2	our water and our air.
L3	And, you know, New Mexico's has a long
L4	history of being a dumping ground for much worse
L5	things, like depleted uranium and nuclear waste. You
L6	know, I mean, somebody has got to finally say enough
L7	is enough and turn this thing around. It's possible.
L8	It's possible.
L9	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you,
20	Ms. Bomhoff.
21	Is there anyone else on the platform
22	who's here to offer public comment? The next session
23	is at 9:00 in the morning. If you have dialed in on
24	your phone, you can press star 5 to raise your
25	virtual hand.

1	Collin Underation. Let's see here.
2	MR. UNDERATION: Good afternoon.
3	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Hello. Would you
4	spell your first and last name please.
5	MR. UNDERATION: My first name is Collin,
6	C-O-L-L-I-N. And my last name is Underation,
7	U-N-D-E-R-A-T-I-O-N.
8	MS. BOMHOFF: Thank you. Do swear or affirm
9	to tell the truth?
10	MR. UNDERATION: I do.
11	MS. BOMHOFF: All right. I'll start your
12	time.
13	MR. UNDERATION: All right. I just wanted
14	to express my concern for the proposed rule change.
15	I worked for a small oil and gas company in Southeast
16	New Mexico, and while I do support responsible
17	producing, I'm afraid that these rules are going to
18	affect the small men, the small company a whole lot
19	more than the large companies.
20	And I depend on the oil and gas
21	industry. My family depended on the oil and gas
22	industry my whole life. And I just want to make sure
23	that the rules are in place for everybody to thrive
24	in this environment.
25	I know that pollution and waste is a big
	Page 254

1	issue, but we need to make sure that the rules were
2	put in place don't just drive out the small people
3	and send all the money out of state to the large
4	companies. That's about all.
5	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you,
6	Mr. Underation.
7	Is there anyone else on the platform to
8	offer comment at this time? The next session is 9:00
9	a.m. No?
10	All right. We will return to the
11	technical case then.
12	And let's see, Mr. Arthur, will you join
13	us at the front of the room here.
14	Ms. Fox or Mr. Tisdel.
15	MR. TISDEL: Yes. Thank you, Madam Hearing
16	Officer.
17	CROSS-EXAMINATION
18	BY MR. TISDEL:
19	Q. Hello, Mr. Arthur. We met earlier, but I'm
20	Kyle Tisdel. I'm with the Western Environmental Law
21	Center, and I represent the applicants in this case?
22	A. Good to meet you.
23	Q. And thank you for your testimony today.
24	You filed direct and rebuttal testimony
25	in this rulemaking on behalf of NMOGA, correct?
	Page 255

1	A. Correct.
2	Q. Do you have the direct and rebuttal
3	testimony available and with you?
4	A. Yes.
5	Q. Great. And you're the author of that
6	testimony, correct?
7	A. Correct.
8	Q. Did anyone else help you prepare the
9	testimony?
10	A. Yes. I had other people with my firm that
11	assisted.
12	Q. Okay. Have you reviewed and are you
13	familiar with the applicant's proposal and the subject
14	of this rulemaking?
15	A. I think so, yes.
16	Q. And have you reviewed the pre-filed direct
17	and rebuttal testimony that's been filed by other
18	technical and fact witnesses in this case?
19	A. Not every single one, but I've read a bunch
20	of those.
21	Q. Okay. And I think I heard you say earlier
22	that you did listen to some of the testimony in the
23	last week or so, but maybe not all of it; is that
24	correct?
25	A. Right.

1	Q. Okay. Let's begin with the expertise that
2	you're offering in this rulemaking. You're the
3	founder and president and chief engineer of ALL
4	Consulting, and you've been doing that for over 26
5	years; is that correct?
6	A. Yeah, 27 years.
7	Q. Great. And you're a registered professional
8	engineer in 36 states, including New Mexico?
9	A. Correct.
L O	Q. But you don't live in New Mexico; is that
L1	right?
L2	A. I do not.
L3	Q. And through your engineering and consulting
L <b>4</b>	practice, you describe being an expert witness on more
L 5	than 2,500 dockets and more than 100 litigation cases;
L6	is that right?
L 7	A. Yes.
L8	Q. Quite prolific. You must be very busy. By
L9	my lawyer math, that's over 100 cases a year for your
20	time as a consultant. Does that sound about right?
21	A. It depends. The dockets I refer to are,
22	like, hearing dockets at various different states. So
23	some of those can occur in many dockets in a single
24	day, for instance.
25	Q. How many cases or dockets are you

1	participating in right now?
2	A. Six or seven cases.
3	Q. Okay. You're not an attorney; is that
4	correct?
5	A. Correct.
6	Q. So while you're not offering your expert
7	legal opinion, based on your testimony, you are
8	familiar with New Mexico's Oil and Gas Act and
9	relevant provisions of the administrative code as it
10	pertains to oil and gas operations in the state; is
11	that correct?
12	A. Generally. I'm not the super expert in
13	every single detail. But yes, I'm the nerdy technical
14	guy.
15	Q. You did go through those provisions pretty
16	extensively in your direct and rebuttal testimony as
17	well as in your summaries so far.
18	A. So I sure tried to.
19	Q. Throughout your direct and rebuttal
20	testimony, you referenced the data, statistics and
21	analysis from various sources, including energy
22	information administration, the New Mexico legislative
23	finance committee, as well as evidence provided by
24	applicants in their direct, among other evidence; is
25	that correct?

1	A. Yes.
2	Q. Going through your testimony, I didn't see
3	any independent data or statistical analysis that was
4	included; is that correct?
5	A. Yes.
6	Q. Did you include any independently prepared
7	tables or graphics or calculations in your testimony?
8	A. I did not.
9	Q. I also didn't see a list of materials that
10	you relied upon when forming your opinion in this
11	case; is that correct?
12	A. I believe that's correct. Can I take a look
13	here.
14	Q. Certainly.
15	CHAIR CHANG: Just for my benefit, could you
16	repeat the question? I just missed it.
17	MR. TISDEL: Yeah. I asked whether he
18	listed any materials that he relied upon in forming
19	his opinion in the case.
20	CHAIR CHANG: Thank you.
21	A. Yeah, it does not appear that we included
22	that.
23	Q. So your commentary in this case is based on
24	applying your general expertise in the field to the
25	work of others in this case; is that correct?
	Page 259

1	A. I'd say in general, yes.
2	Q. Okay. Great. Part 25 NMAC involves the
3	plugging and abandonment of wells with the general
4	idea that after a certain amount of time, an inactive
5	well either needs to be plugged or it needs to go into
6	temporary abandonment status; is that about right?
7	A. Yes.
8	Q. And under current rules, there's no
9	limitation on the amount of time that a well can sit
10	in temporary abandonment, or TA, status; is that
11	right?
12	A. Essentially.
13	Q. Indeed, there are many wells that have not
14	produced any oil and gas for decades, but they're
15	still on that temporary abandonment list; is that
16	correct?
17	A. I would say, yes, that's generally the case
18	throughout the country.
19	Q. And currently, the terms "beneficial use" or
20	"beneficial purposes" appear throughout the rules, but
21	they currently don't have a definition in New Mexico;
22	is that right?
23	A. Correct.
24	Q. And OCD has proposed to define these terms
25	at what would be 19.15.2.7B(7) NMAC. And that
	Page 260

1	proposed definition has been adopted by applicants; is
2	that right?
3	A. I don't have all the numbers memorized, but
4	I believe I know what that is.
5	Q. It's just the definition, a proposed
6	definition of beneficial use and beneficial purposes.
7	A. I just would like to could we pull that
8	definition up so I can see.
9	Q. I'm not going to probe into that. It's just
10	the general proposition that a definition doesn't
11	currently exist, but it's being proposed
12	A. Yes.
13	Q in this process, right?
14	A. Yes.
15	Q. All right. For purposes of Part 25, OCD has
16	proposed and applicants have adopted a presumption of
17	no beneficial use; is that correct?
18	A. Yes.
19	Q. And that presumption includes a rebuttal
20	presumption that a well is not capable of beneficial
21	use if in a consecutive 12-month period, the well has
22	not produced for at least 90 days and has not produced
23	at least 90 BOE; is that right?
24	A. I believe so, yes.
25	Q. And I know you said earlier that you didn't
	Page 261

1	hear all the testimony, but did you hear the testimony
2	of OCD Deputy Director Brandon Powell in his
3	suggestion to drop the days of production threshold
4	from this presumption?
5	A. I did not hear that testimony.
6	Q. Okay. And so I assume you also didn't hear,
7	you haven't talked to counsel about Mr. Powell's
8	description that the days of production criteria could
9	be easily manipulated and that production threshold
10	alone was sufficient?
11	A. We did not discuss.
12	Q. Now I'm going to go through a few provisions
13	of your direct and rebuttal. I will quote back to you
14	where appropriate. I'm going to try to avoid putting
15	it up on the screen, just to save us all the time. If
16	you want me to pull it up, I'd be glad to, but I'm not
17	trying to parse your specific words. I'm just using
18	those as general references. Okay?
19	A. I tend to prefer seeing it, if that's okay.
20	Q. Sure. If you need them after I'm describing
21	them, just let me know if that doesn't sound right or
22	if you want to actually look at the language. Okay?
23	A. Okay.
24	Q. All right. So at page 8 of your direct
25	testimony you state, and I think you stated earlier

1	today as well, that the 90-day criteria are too rigid
2	and that operators may intentionally shut in wells for
3	extended periods, often exceeding 12 months. And then
4	you list a number of reasons why that might be the
5	case. Does that sound right?
6	A. Yes.
7	Q. Do you still stand by that statement for
8	purposes of the 90-day production criteria?
9	A. I do.
10	Q. And your testimony, I think I heard you say
11	earlier today, is that that 90-day period should be
12	extended to five years; is that right?
13	A. That would be reasonable.
14	Q. Okay. Even in light of Mr. Powell's
15	description that such criteria at that level could be
16	easily manipulated by industry and that the production
17	threshold alone is sufficient?
18	A. I didn't hear his testimony, so I can't
19	comment on that.
20	Q. But can you comment on the sort of your
21	recommendation of five years versus that
22	recommendation that the days of production be dropped
23	from the beneficial use definition?
24	A. I think I already talked about that in my
25	direct testimony that we just talked about. But 90

1	days is a very short window. I can concur that there
2	may be experiences where you have wells that you don't
3	want to maybe extend to that degree. But that's just,
4	I'd say, an unreasonable window.
5	Q. Okay. So focusing just on the 90 BOE
6	production threshold, that's just 0.25 BOE per day; is
7	that correct?
8	A. I didn't do the math, but that sounds about
9	right.
10	Q. Okay. And in your direct testimony, you
11	talk about sort of stripper wells as being a category
12	of well that's sort of recognized both in New Mexico
13	and nationally as a low-producing well, correct?
14	A. I'd say that's reasonable to categorize it
15	that way.
16	Q. And a stripper well produces 10 BOE per day
17	or less over a 12-month period. Does that sound like
18	the right definition?
19	A. There are multiple definitions across the
20	country, but that's generally one, yes.
21	Q. And the IOGCC talks about that definition;
22	is that right?
23	A. They do. And they had a report that came
24	out on that. But again, it can vary.
25	Q. So for comparison, a stripper well is
	Page 264

1	defined as anything less than essentially 3,650 BOE
2	over a year. And the rebuttable presumption for no
3	beneficial use being proposed is just a fraction of
4	that 90 BOE per year; is that correct?
5	A. It's a portion of it. But I will also say
6	that I know viable wells is the example that I gave
7	that had been producing even a quarter barrel a year
8	for 100 years.
9	Q. Okay. And for even a well that's producing
10	less than this very small amount, under applicant's
11	proposal, an operator still has the ability to rebut
12	the presumption of no beneficial use and thus avoid
13	the plugging of that well; is that correct?
14	A. Technically, that's available.
15	Q. And you've identified even the type of
16	criteria that could be provided to rebut that
17	presumption, and that could be provided to OCD,
18	correct?
19	A. Yes. And that on a multi-well basis could
20	be a significant overhead cost to any operator. And,
21	you know, so with considering that just because it's
22	low producing, it's non-economic or whatever,
23	that's you know, what's partially driving some of
24	this as opposed to, you know, not necessarily coming
25	to a specific assumption.

1	Q. Each drilling permit comes with the
2	expressed obligation that the operator plug and
3	abandon that well at the end of its life; is that
4	correct?
5	A. I believe so, yes.
6	Q. And unfortunately that doesn't always
7	happen, do you agree?
8	A. Over what time frames are we talking about?
9	So are we're talking about current drilling permits?
10	Are we talking drilling permits that were issued in
11	1928 when the first well was drilled in the New Mexico
12	Permian Basin.
13	Q. I'm talking about the general idea that
14	orphan wells exist.
15	A. So right now, so the permits right now,
16	there's orphan wells that exist. But just like some
17	of the comments that we had about this, the costs of
18	plugging that have gone on right now, this is a
19	lot of those wells are old wells that were abandoned
20	by operators a long time ago. Just like the examples
21	that the OCD gave, the number of wells that get you
22	know, it's not just across the board. So there's good
23	operators, maybe there is bad actors and all that.
24	But so yes, that does happen.
25	I'm dealing with another litigation case

1	right now where there was a bad actor that did exactly
2	that. But by and large again, remembering that
3	95 percent of the wells are plugged by private
4	industry.
5	Q. But you agree that the OCD maintains an
6	orphan well list? So there's a list of wells that
7	have been abandoned by their operators, correct?
8	A. There have been, yes.
9	Q. When an operator declares bankruptcy or
10	otherwise walks away from their plugging obligation,
11	those wells are referred to as stripper wells. Yes?
12	Excuse me, correct that. Those wells are referred to
13	as orphan wells, correct?
14	A. Right, I would generally say that. But I
15	would offer something within the context of that, that
16	there are bankruptcies. There are companies that go
17	out of business that lose their well.
18	I will also say that in that line, that
19	doesn't mean that everyone that's declared bankruptcy
20	is a bad actor. Nobody expected the price of oil to
21	shoot down to minus \$47 a barrel during COVID. I went
22	to work for EPA in the 1980s, when oil went down to \$6
23	a barrel, because I needed a job. But there was a lot
24	of bankruptcies and a lot of those bankruptcies were
25	big companies.

1	So it does happen and the state has a
2	fund that helps with that. Those companies would have
3	been required to have the blanket bonds and so forth
4	with that, too. So it's not like there wasn't a
5	financial assurance available and present.
6	Q. You testified earlier today, I think in your
7	summary, and you said, quote, orphan wells are a
8	problem. Do you recall that?
9	A. Yes.
LO	Q. And you believe that's true nationally and
L1	here in New Mexico; is that correct?
L2	A. You can find a lot of stuff on the internet
L3	where I've looked at problem wells and so forth. And
L4	orphan wells can be a problem. Orphan wells, I'll
L5	tell, they can be an opportunity, too. So they can be
L6	a problem.
L7	It really depends on assessing those
L8	wells and looking at the risks. So to be able to say,
L9	is every orphan well a problem? I would say no. So
20	orphan wells can be a problem, but in California and
21	other states, they're converting some of those wells.
22	In Oklahoma and Missouri, converting some of them for
23	geothermal energy, for long term battery storage.
24	Louisiana just= permitted the first
25	bio-oil injection class 5 converted an orphan well
	Page 268

1	to a class 5 commercial experimental well for bio-oil
2	injection, which was CO2 sequestration.
3	So there are opportunities, but they can
4	be a problem. Some of them are purging. Some of them
5	have been there for decades and decades and decades
6	and they have corroded casing, like some of the
7	examples that you saw, yes.
8	Q. And I'm reluctant to conflate different
9	sections of the proposed rules, but for both the
10	presumption of no beneficial use as well as the
11	marginal well definition or the demonstration of
12	putting a well into temporary abandonment status, that
13	is all the type of information that an operator could
14	provide to OCD, correct, that would either justify
15	that a well has a beneficial use or justify that a
16	well should be eligible to be in approved temporary
17	abandonment status? Do you agree?
18	A. So your question was that an operator could
19	provide, and you know, and so what is you know,
20	what is needed to provide.
21	So if you're a regulatory agency, and
22	I'm a former regulator and worked as an expert with
23	multiple state oil and gas regulatory agencies and so
24	forth, you know, if I ask an operator, "Well, you
25	know, you could provide some stuff," as opposed to
	Page 269

1	helping them understand what we need as a regulator,
2	it's kind of two different things.
3	So, you know and moreover, you know,
4	if you're thinking that you're going to, you know,
5	re-complete wells or do an EOR project or whatever, I
6	mean, sometimes like the Oxy example, that can take a
7	long time. So you could provide those things that
8	you're thinking of, but you may say, well, we're
9	looking at three different things, three different
10	opportunities to be able to see what these you
11	know, what looks appropriate, what looks like it will
12	be the best option for us, for these wells. And it
13	may turn out that all three of those things didn't
14	work and they find something else.
15	Q. But the proposed rules allow an operator to
16	take that information to OCD, correct?
17	A. They don't prevent it.
18	Q. Indeed, the proposed rules encourage an
19	operator to take that information to OCD, correct?
20	A. They talk about a lot of information that
21	can be provided and so forth, which can be a
22	challenge. But they do allow that.
23	Q. So you did testify that you closely read the
24	LFC report. Did I hear that earlier today?
25	A. Yes.

1	Q. And in the summary of the LFC report, it
2	identifies that OCD has plugging authority for roughly
3	700 wells, will likely need to plug an additional 1400
4	inactive wells, and that there are more than 3000
5	wells at risk of being orphaned. Does that sound
6	correct?
7	A. Sounds correct.
8	Q. And you don't dispute those numbers?
9	A. No. I don't have the LFC report in front of
10	me, but that sounds from the immediate memory, that
11	sounds
12	Q. So according to the LFC, and as you agree,
13	the orphan well problem in the state is poised to
14	become worse; is that correct?
15	A. I would say that there may become more
16	orphan wells, and unless there are other options
17	for that. But there could become an increase in
18	orphan wells based on what was included in the LFC
19	report.
20	But I have not looked at all of those
21	wells and seen what the viability is and so forth.
22	And I don't know that they necessarily did either.
23	Q. Okay. The LFC also estimates the state's
24	current and near future liability for well plugging
25	and site remediation at between 700 million and 1.6

1	billion. Does that sound correct?
2	A. That's what they estimated.
3	Q. And you don't dispute those estimates?
4	A. I understand that's what's there. I think
5	that I don't think that they considered everything
6	that they should have when they put those numbers
7	together.
8	Q. Do you know the current balance of the
9	state's reclamation fund?
10	A. I don't I didn't I haven't
11	specifically looked at that, but I want to say it was
12	like \$46 million or something like that.
13	Q. It's 66 million, but does that sound
14	right?
15	A. Sounds about right.
16	Q. Okay. And are you aware that New Mexico has
17	received 55 million roughly in federal grants through
18	the orphaned oil program and is eligible for 111
19	million more in federal grants?
20	A. I am.
21	Q. So even with the federal grants, there's a
22	massive gap between the amount available in the
23	Reclamation Fund and the state's near-term plugging
24	liability? Would you agree that's correct?
25	A. Based on what the LFC assumed, based on
	Page 272

1	relatively high plugging rates that doesn't account
2	for, for instance, some of the testimony that I
3	provided that both can be plugged for a lot less,
4	often.
5	Q. But you agree that this gap represents a
6	major financial risk to the state?
7	A. I don't know that I necessarily do agree
8	with that, because I think that a lot of what the
9	states have been getting money for and that you've
10	seen on plugging have been high-risk, wells that did
11	have exactly like the examples that the OCD witness
12	showed, was wells that were in significant disrepair
13	and problems. And they're all not like that.
14	Q. And you testified earlier today that OCD
15	takes on the worst of the worst.
16	A. They often do. But I would also say that
17	it you know, based on my experience with the state
18	plugging stuff, they cannot do things like sell pipe,
19	where an operator can, so they're not allowed to. So
20	there's different things from both well-plugging and
21	site restoration.
22	So we just cleaned up another site that
23	I was involved with that had a zero net cost by
24	letting by essentially selling all the surface
25	equipment, tanks and pump jacks and all that kind of

1	stuff, to offset the actual restoration costs.
2	So there's you know, is there truly
3	this massive disparity about the potential of what is
4	going to be needed versus what is actually there? I
5	don't know that that work has truly been done.
6	Q. When a well becomes orphaned, it is the
7	state that plugs that well. You would agree?
8	A. Are we talking in all cases? So on federal
9	land or in, like, tribal land or just like I would
10	say generally it is, but there's also
11	Q. Exceptions to the rule.
12	A. There's also many exceptions to the rule.
13	So like, for instance, in the state of Texas, a
14	landowner can get partial plugging from the state,
15	like half, half of the estimated plugging costs, and
16	they would take on the other half and plug the well.
17	There's, you know, companies that are
18	plugging walls for carbon credits. There are all
19	sorts of different things.
20	Q. Here in New Mexico, orphan wells are plugged
21	by OCD. Would you agree with that?
22	A. Unless they're plugged by someone else. But
23	that's their OCD is the primary.
24	Q. Okay. And financial assurance operates,
25	more or less, like an insurance policy for the state
	Page 274

1	in the event that a well becomes orphaned? Would you
2	agree with that?
3	A. I'd say that's correct.
4	Q. And financial assurance is required by the
5	Oil and Gas Act, correct?
6	A. It is.
7	Q. So it's then the cost to the state and not
8	the operator that is relevant for the plugging of
9	orphaned wells? You would agree with that?
10	A. Well, less the amount of financial assurance
11	that that operator had in place.
12	Q. Sure. And according again to the LFC
13	report, the average cost to OCD to plug a well is
14	\$163,000. You would agree with the LFC report that
15	that's what the LFC report stated?
16	A. That's what the LFC report stated and base
17	their numbers off of, which is, you know you
18	know you know, that's like saying I'm going to
19	build the Empire State Building, I'm going to build a
20	small two room, you know, shack, and they're both
21	going to cost the same.
22	Q. Okay. But that is the average cost for OCD
23	for their plugging, right?
24	A. For the plugging that they've done so far on
25	problem well, yes. Which is different than plugging

1	costs for wells across the board.
2	Q. And so based current blanket plugging
3	financial assurance for active wells right now,
4	currently, is set at a maximum of \$250,000 for
5	operators of more than 100 wells, correct?
6	A. Correct.
7	Q. So based on OCD's average cost to plug, that
8	would amount to less than two wells plugged, correct?
9	A. Based on that plugging cost for problem
10	miles, that's correct. However, as I noted, many
11	wells don't cost anywhere near that amount of money to
12	plug. So, you know, whether it's OCD or an operator,
13	you know, all the wells don't cost that much. Okay.
14	Q. You would agree that a well that's producing
15	a lot of oil or gas doesn't have much near-term risk
16	of becoming orphaned, right.
17	A. I've seen wells that had higher production
18	rates become orphaned. So, for instance, if you look
19	at the number of companies that went bankrupt during
20	the COVID pandemic when oil hit minus \$47 a barrel,
21	there were some companies that went bankrupt that had
22	high-producing wells.
23	In 1982, I was working for a company and
24	Penn Square Bank went bankrupt and every company that
25	had, you know, loans through them got forced into
	Page 276

1	bankruptcy.
2	You know, so yeah, can you have higher
3	rate wells that become orphaned? Yes.
4	Q. Those would be exceptional circumstances,
5	that a high-producing well that an operator would walk
6	away from. Would you agree with that?
7	A. Similar exception to the extraordinary
8	plugging costs that the LFC report, you know, showed
9	from based on OCD's averages that don't align with
LO	normal operations. So, they're both looking at
L1	extremes.
L2	Q. Okay. But then, you know, just sort of
L3	thinking about that, your testimony is that a well
L4	that's producing less than 90 BOE over the year, that
L5	those wells have a lot of utility, right? But that a
L6	well that's like highly producing oil and gas, an
L7	operator would still walk away from that, but there's
L8	a little contradiction there. Would you agree?
L9	A. Are you suggesting a well that produces 90
20	barrels of oil that, you know, an operator wouldn't
21	have a problem walking away from.
22	Q. I'm suggesting that there is a presumption
23	of no beneficial use for a well that produces less
24	than 90 BOE, that there's a that presumption is
25	rebuttable, but

1	A. I know a lot of small operators, family
2	operators that wells like that are critical to their
3	future and their livelihood.
4	Q. Okay. In both your direct and rebuttal
5	testimony, you advocate for a risk-based bonding
6	approach; is that correct?
7	A. Yes.
8	Q. There's many ways to quantify a risk. You
9	would agree with that?
10	A. I do.
11	Q. And in your direct testimony, you offer that
12	risk-based bonding should consider operator compliance
13	history, well-condition, asset maturity and
14	demonstrated plugging costs, correct?
15	A. Those are some of the things to consider. I
16	mean, you know, I helped the OCD develop the
17	risk-based data management system. So the idea of
18	risk can include a number of different things. So you
19	have to look at that with an experienced eye and
20	decide what is most appropriate, I'd say.
21	Q. Neither you nor any party that you're aware
22	of have provided any specific framework that would
23	increase existing financial assurance to account for
24	these enumerated risks?
25	A. So I'm not aware of that. I will say that
	Page 278

1	the Groundwater Protection Council is modifying the
2	risk-based data management system for idle and orphan
3	wells to account for some of these kind of risks,
4	including the things in there, and have been working
5	with different state oil and gas and other agencies in
6	that. But they're just starting that process now.
7	Q. At page 87 of your rebuttal, you are
8	responding to applicant's financial assurance
9	recommendations. You register concern with any
10	increases in paperwork or administrative processes,
11	stating that OCD is already inundated with
12	documentation; is that right? Does that sound right?
13	A. What lines on page 87.
14	Q. It starts at line 2001 and goes to 2002 on
15	page 87.
16	A. Yes.
17	Q. And then on page 13 of your rebuttal, you
18	state that the Commission should reject arbitrary
19	volumetric cutoffs in favor of a case-by-case
20	assessment that accounts for market conditions,
21	reservoir characteristics, and long term field of
22	development strategies. Does that sound right?
23	A. Could you ask that again.
24	Q. Yeah. On page 13 of your rebuttal, you
25	state that the Commission should reject arbitrary
	Page 279

1	volumetric cutoffs in favor of a case-by-case
2	assessment that accounts for market conditions,
3	reservoir characteristics, and long term field
4	development strategies.
5	A. Yes.
б	Q. How do you square your recommendation to
7	assess the risk by considering operator compliance
8	history, well-condition, asset maturity and
9	demonstrated plugging costs, as well as making a
10	case-by-case assessment that accounts for market
11	conditions, reservoir characteristics, and long term
12	field development strategies, while also avoiding
13	paperwork and administrative processes to OCD?
14	A. So that's an interesting question, and I
15	think kind of goes to part of what I was talking
16	about. Because OCD already has a lot going on,
17	industry has a lot going on. And I think what we're
18	seeing on an overall perspective is that having a data
19	management systems, AI, whatever, they can help us
20	with those things.
21	Because what I did, I got to serve as a
22	consulting expert to the DOE, DOI and EPA for the MERC
23	program, looking at well plugging of potentially
24	uneconomic marginal wells and idle wells.

25

And what we did and what I helped them

with, is they came up with -- and I worked with them as well at the U.S. Geological Survey on a program to actually assess risk based on a lot of those things that you're talking about. They also include wells that have had mechanical failures in the area and so forth.

2.1

2.4

So we have a lot of data that we don't necessarily always use. And it can include things like well depth and production in the area and mechanical integrity failures and non-compliance and all those different things.

And I will say that DOE has come up with an app that goes in that direction, but I would say it's like version 1.0. So there is work in doing exactly what you're talking about, but it's -- you know, if you really look at this effort of where orphan wells, let's say, or even the inactive idle marginal wells that have gotten so much attention, all of this has really happened, I would say, just in the last short few years.

And there also winds up being a lot of mischaracterization, like we saw with some of the public comment, in reviewing some of the liabilities when a lot of those wells being plugged are old wells, you know, with operators long gone and things were

1	very different and there were different rules and
2	regulations and so forth.
3	So I think we've got work to do. I
4	think that just based on my discussion with NMOGA,
5	they would be very open to working with, you know, OCC
6	and OCD on trying to develop and refine things that
7	made sense there. My guess is that between the
8	federal government, State of New Mexico, DOE, IOGCC,
9	GWPC, you know, and so forth, and even EDF and WELC
10	and whatever, that there could be a lot of really good
11	stuff happen.
12	And I would sure rather see us launch
13	some great things so that we can control contamination
14	and emissions and all those things in a more healthy
15	manner that isn't just, oh, yeah, we're going to run a
16	bunch of companies out of business because they're
17	small. Like, I'm a big believer in small businesses
18	and so forth.
19	Q. Yeah. Neither you nor NMOGA has offered any
20	specific recommendation for how a case-by-case
21	financial assurance framework would work; is that
22	correct?
23	A. I wasn't asked to do that. I don't know if
24	NMOGA has done that.
25	Q. You haven't done that before?

1	A. I have not done that.
2	Q. Throughout your testimony, you raised
3	concern that the definition of marginal well and the
4	presumption of no beneficial use will result in
5	premature plugging of wells; is that correct?
6	A. Yes.
7	Q. For example, page 4 of your direct, you
8	state that this approach would disproportionately
9	impact smaller operators and those with large
10	portfolios of marginal or inactive wells, potentially
11	accelerating the premature abandonment of wells that
12	remain economically viable. Does that sound correct?
13	A. I'm trying to find that.
14	Q. I'm not going to hold you to the exact
15	language, but that's at line 75.
16	A. Yes.
17	Q. And at page 13 of your direct, you state
18	that the 90-day criteria and WELC's proposed
19	presumption will likely lead to the premature plugging
20	of viable wells contrary to the Commission and
21	Division's mandate to prevent waste and protect
22	correlative rights; is that correct?
23	A. Yes.
24	Q. And that's something sort of consistently
25	that you raised in your testimony is this idea of
	Page 283

1	premature plugging?
2	A. I very much understand the need to hold
3	industry accountable to maintain compliance for OCD to
4	address bad actors when they have them. They have
5	rules now that they could be enforcing that I don't
6	necessarily always see.
7	But within this, yes, that's an issue.
8	But we have, I would say, a similar responsibility to
9	make sure that we don't do things that create waste.
10	These resources are critical. They're critical to
11	New Mexico's future, and so we want them to develop
12	responsibly.
13	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Mr. Tisdel, you have
14	five minutes.
15	MR. TISDEL: Thank you, Madam Hearing
16	Officer.
17	BY MR. TISDEL:
18	Q. At page 113, going into 114 of your
19	rebuttal, you state that proposed changes risk forcing
20	premature plugging of wells that serve important rules
21	in lease management, reservoir balancing and future
22	recovery; is that correct?
23	A. Reservoir management or candidacy for
24	re-completion or refractures. So, yes.
25	Q. And these other purposes of a well, lease
	Page 284

1	management, reservoir balancing and future recovery,
2	are consistently raised throughout your testimony as
3	reasons for not plugging a well that is no longer
4	producing; is that correct?
5	A. Yes. And those are examples, so not an
6	exhausted list.
7	Q. Sure. I want to talk quickly about lease
8	management. So I understand this is where a well that
9	is either not producing or producing a very small
10	amount, and for purposes of the presumption of no
11	beneficial use, that would be less than 0.25 BOE per
12	day could nevertheless hold that lease or unit, if
13	there was a unit, to keep that lease from expiring.
14	Does that sound right?
15	A. That's correct. But even a well producing
16	.25 barrels a day, on an overall lease production
17	could be significant. And I've seen cases where you
18	had wells that were holding a lease, producing a small
19	amount of production, so that the operator could get
20	investors and funding to be able to do a bigger
21	project like an EOR project.
22	Q. But even inactive wells, you've stated in
23	your testimony, could still serve a purpose to hold
24	that lease or unit?
25	A. Yes. As operators look to alternate zones
	Page 285
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1 or potential re-completions or whatever, yes. 2 O. So that whole lease or even an entire unit wouldn't be producing oil or gas. But according to 3 your testimony, such a well still has a beneficial 4 use; is that correct? 5 A. Yes. 6 Q. Can you explain how tying up that lease or unit in non-production for perhaps years would serve 8 9 OCD's mandate to prevent waste. 10 A. So once those walls are plugged, let's say, 11 oftentimes those resources are lost forever. 12 imagine if you have those resources underground and 13 you have this well that has access that allows you to 14 do logging, geophysical logging, or perforating, or 15 testing, or whatever that is, as you're evaluating 16 perhaps a lease, an area, a region, basin, or various 17 different things. Sometimes that can take a long time to do. And having that access there can be critical. 18 19 I've seen it. And once you give up on that well and 20 you plug it, it's over. 2.1 So, yes, somebody could come in and say, drill a new well, but now they're having to deal with 22 more speculation than they may have had had they had 23 2.4 access to that well so that they could do, like I said, geophysical logging, or sidewalk coring or 25

1	whatever.
2	MR. TISDEL: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Arthur.
3	I appreciate your testimony. No further questions.
4	HEARING OFFICER ORTH: Thank you,
5	Mr. Tisdel. All right. We'll break for the night.
6	Resume it at 9:00 in the morning with public comment
7	and continuing examination of Mr. Arthur. Goodnight.
8	(Proceedings adjourned at 5:00 p.m.)
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	Page 287

1	AFFIRMATION OF COMPLETION OF TRANSCRIPT
2	
3	I, Kelli Gallegos, DO HEREBY AFFIRM on
4	October 28, 2025, a hearing of the New Mexico Oil
5	Conservation Commission was taken before me via video
6	conference.
7	I FURTHER AFFIRM that I did report in
8	stenographic shorthand the proceedings as set forth
9	herein, and the foregoing is a true and correct
10	transcript of the proceedings to the best of my
11	ability.
12	I FURTHER AFFIRM that I am neither employed
13	by nor related to any of the parties in this matter
14	and that I have no interest in the final disposition
15	of this matter.
16	Bell Gallon.
17	Kelli Gallegos
	VERITEXT LEGAL SOLUTIONS
18	500 Fourth Street, NW, Suite 105
	Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102
19	
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23	
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25	
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## [& - 19.15.25]

0	10 000 90.17	101 4.11	105.25 106.16
&	<b>10,000</b> 89:17	<b>121</b> 4:11 <b>1220</b> 1:6 2:10	195:25 196:16
<b>&amp;</b> 2:21 3:3,4	232:3		197:11,13,21
167:4	<b>100</b> 41:5 57:6	<b>125</b> 3:14	197:23 199:1,5
0	102:5,8,9	<b>12:04</b> 135:7	201:4,16,20
<b>0.166667</b> 98:3	149:13 193:15		202:13 215:8
<b>0.10000</b> 7 98.3 <b>0.25</b> 264:6	196:14 202:24	122:4 168:21	215:11 216:4
285:11	202:25 228:20	228:3 279:17	216:24 227:21
	229:3 231:24	279:24 283:17	251:12
0producing	240:16 241:21	<b>136</b> 4:12	<b>155</b> 4:14
149:23	248:18 257:15	<b>14</b> 28:17	<b>158</b> 4:14
1	257:19 265:8	156:25 181:21	<b>159</b> 4:15
<b>1</b> 41:11,18 70:2	276:5	<b>1400</b> 271:3	<b>16</b> 152:8 183:2
70:18,19 84:17	<b>105</b> 288:18	<b>146</b> 4:13,20	243:21
98:2 99:3	<b>109</b> 4:9	<b>149</b> 4:13	<b>160,000</b> 248:13
123:12 126:20	<b>10:34</b> 78:2	<b>15</b> 4:7 17:1	<b>163</b> 4:15
155:2	<b>10:50</b> 78:2	19:12 29:10,18	<b>163,000</b> 275:14
<b>1,000</b> 3:4 42:11	<b>11</b> 179:15	43:24 49:19	<b>167</b> 4:5
47:16 49:4	202:24	53:9 56:12,22	<b>17</b> 29:25
59:6 60:7	<b>111</b> 4:9 272:18	58:18 72:23	<b>175</b> 4:17
92:11 105:14	<b>113</b> 284:18	77:24 78:1	<b>18</b> 30:20 87:1
121:24 190:20	<b>114</b> 4:10	96:15 104:14	187:21
190:25 191:12	284:18	104:22 105:2	<b>180</b> 47:17
232:2 251:12	<b>116</b> 4:10	105:19 106:1,6	83:19 92:12
<b>1,975</b> 92:8	<b>1161</b> 69:12	106:6,11 122:4	121:24 150:16
<b>1.0.</b> 281:14	<b>11:00</b> 78:1	133:5,6,7,10	190:20
<b>1.6</b> 242:3	<b>12</b> 34:5 128:11	156:20 168:21	<b>19</b> 31:10
248:22,23	128:12 129:7	182:14 199:4	185:16 204:11
249:12 271:25	179:19 182:21	215:10 228:2	<b>19.15.2</b> 1:10
<b>10</b> 2:16 43:24	184:2 190:22	<b>150</b> 56:8	<b>19.15.2.7</b> 17:25
72:23 127:25	198:16 227:19	185:25	19.15.2.7b
136:15 141:23	243:20 244:19	<b>150,000</b> 12:10	260:25
174:11 178:19	261:21 263:3	12:20 24:22	<b>19.15.25</b> 1:10
202:24 238:17	264:17	56:14 63:16	34:5 188:13
264:16	<b>1200</b> 232:2	64:20 123:18	227:18
		177:8 192:14	

## [19.15.25.12 - 25]

19.15.25.12	19.15.8.9c	121:19 123:11	2022 86:8
62:14 137:11	69:22 70:10,22	126:21 137:6	89:18 90:14
155:25	19.15.8.9e	159:13 175:14	91:15,19
19.15.25.12.	62:15	225:18	204:11
36:24 38:5	19.15.8.9f.	<b>2,500</b> 165:21	<b>2023</b> 89:18
19.15.25.13	200:16	176:1 257:15	98:1
62:13 71:12	19.15.8.9g	<b>2.3</b> 48:15 49:9	<b>2024</b> 83:12
137:23 155:24	69:25	59:7	89:22 92:7,8
156:25	<b>19.15.9</b> 1:10	<b>2.5</b> 48:15	92:12 97:21
19.15.25.14	209:23	<b>20</b> 77:24 129:1	98:2 149:14
62:14 138:2	<b>19.15.9.8</b> 28:11	186:17 232:24	151:10 152:4,5
19.15.25.14.	45:16	<b>20,000</b> 202:2	151:10 152:4,5
155:25	19.15.9.8c	<b>2000</b> 10:9	232:2
19.15.25.8	109:13	<b>2000</b> 10.9 <b>2000s</b> 143:21	<b>2025</b> 1:14 97:2
186:19	<b>109.13 19.15.9.9</b> 30:2	<b>2000s</b> 143.21 <b>2001</b> 279:14	99:23 143:22
19.15.25.8.	45:19	<b>2001</b> 279.14 <b>2002</b> 279:14	152:7,9 288:4
31:11	<b>19.15.9.9.</b> 29:10	<b>2002</b> 279.14 <b>2009</b> 164:18	<b>2028</b> 101:16
19.15.25.9	19.13.9.9. 29.10 1900s 235:3	<b>2010</b> 164:18	123:12 199:3
45:20 226:13	<b>1900s</b> 233.3 <b>1901</b> 228:16	235:7	<b>203</b> 99:25
19.15.25.9.	<b>1901</b> 228.10 <b>1905</b> 232:18	<b>2011</b> 10:13	<b>203</b> 99.23 <b>21</b> 32:16
32:17 33:3	<b>1905</b> 232:18 <b>1925</b> 232:18	<b>2011</b> 10.13 <b>2012</b> 142:5	144:20 186:22
<b>19.15.4.</b> 139:23	<b>1928</b> 266:11	<b>2012</b> 142.5 <b>2013</b> 142.5	<b>213</b> 3:14
<b>19.15.5</b> 1:10	1950s 230:20	<b>2013</b> 142.3 <b>2014</b> 142:7	<b>213</b> 5.14 <b>22</b> 56:17 130:3
<b>19.15.5.9.</b> 19:7	<b>1956</b> 194:9	<b>2014</b> 142.7 <b>2015</b> 11:3	187:14
19.15.5.9a	1980s 228:9	142:7 164:18	<b>2208</b> 2:21
207:16	267:22	<b>2016</b> 164:19	<b>223</b> 86:13
<b>19.15.8</b> 1:10	<b>1982</b> 276:23	<b>2010</b> 104.13 <b>2019</b> 86:9,13	<b>23</b> 56:17 188:9
241:1	<b>1:05</b> 135:6,7	204:17	<b>238</b> 4:21
<b>19.15.8.9</b> 20:6	1st 1:5	<b>2020</b> 41:24	<b>24</b> 97:24
25:14 63:9	2	86:9,15 87:1	188:18
65:20 71:1		87:14 97:2	<b>24683</b> 5:6
19.15.8.9.g	<b>2</b> 2:4 30:6,14	204:11	238:21
69:17	30:18,18,22,22	<b>2021</b> 87:2,14	<b>25</b> 28:18 71:11
19.15.8.9a	31:8 69:22	89:17 90:14	130:17 155:1
199:16	70:10,12,13,14 70:22 71:2	97:21 152:18	160:4 189:2

## [25 - 70-2-14]

	1	T	1
210:6,13 211:2	105:20,25	<b>45</b> 144:18	<b>52</b> 205:3
211:23 260:2	106:12 125:11	151:9 178:2	<b>53</b> 206:9
261:15 285:16	125:11,13	199:14	<b>54</b> 207:14
<b>25,000</b> 196:11	129:3,5 183:10	<b>46</b> 200:14	<b>55</b> 272:17
202:23	187:2,6 190:17	272:12	<b>57</b> 209:13
<b>25.13</b> 189:3	208:17 214:14	<b>47</b> 200:24	<b>58</b> 209:22
<b>250,000</b> 25:20	227:19	267:21 276:20	<b>5:00</b> 287:8
66:23 67:7,12	<b>3000</b> 271:4	<b>49</b> 139:10	6
67:14,15,20	<b>31</b> 191:17	144:6 195:14	<b>6</b> 49:8 59:8
68:18 69:15	<b>32</b> 91:16 192:9	202:15	122:16 126:7
70:4,25 71:3,7	<b>33</b> 193:1	<b>4:00</b> 11:13 14:9	126:25 142:13
196:13,17	<b>34</b> 136:22	238:18,19	187:21 267:22
202:24 276:4	151:14	<b>4q</b> 97:13	<b>6,000</b> 194:4
<b>255</b> 4:17	<b>35</b> 42:21 89:11	<b>4th</b> 3:4	<b>6,500</b> 194.4
<b>26</b> 131:20	194:5	5	<b>60</b> 19:22 20:2
189:11 257:4	<b>36</b> 176:7 257:8	<b>5</b> 4:3 11:15	52:25 55:14,14
<b>267</b> 99:24	<b>37</b> 195:20	72:23 76:15,20	55:23
<b>27</b> 189:21	<b>38</b> 195:23	109:13 122:3	<b>60,000</b> 169:22
257:6	<b>3:35</b> 238:19	126:7,25 141:7	<b>600</b> 80:24 81:2
<b>28</b> 1:14 38:22	<b>3h</b> 42:21 89:11	244:4 253:24	<b>61</b> 4:8 210:17
189:21 190:2	4	268:25 269:1	<b>62</b> 69:12
288:4	<b>4</b> 126:22	<b>50</b> 10:21 52:25	<b>63</b> 212:1
<b>288</b> 4:23	140:10 283:7	55:14,14	<b>64</b> 212:12
<b>28943</b> 288:16	<b>4,000</b> 202:9	229:25 233:3	<b>65</b> 213:7
<b>2:00</b> 174:12	<b>4,400</b> 202.9 <b>4,400</b> 241:24	<b>50,000</b> 66:13,25	<b>66</b> 213:7
<b>2:10</b> 174:12	<b>40</b> 55:14,23	67:11,18 68:18	272:13
<b>2h</b> 96:15,20	141:13,14	202:24	<b>68</b> 8:1 214:17
3	197:7	<b>500</b> 3:4 37:12	
	<b>409</b> 2:4	37:17 57:6	7
<b>3</b> 31:1,2 121:6 125:10 126:21	<b>409</b> 2:4 <b>40s</b> 10:21	76:18 102:7	<b>7</b> 121:10
129:16 138:10	<b>40s</b> 10.21 <b>41</b> 197:16	288:18	260:25
151:15	<b>41</b> 197:16 <b>42</b> 198:9	50s 231:10	<b>7,000</b> 87:2
		<b>50s</b> 251:10 <b>51</b> 48:14 53:9	<b>7.4</b> 195:14
<b>3,650</b> 265:1	43 86:14		<b>70-2-14</b> 66:8
<b>30</b> 31:19,23	198:21	53:11 204:6	
58:18 59:4			

## [700 - absolutely]

<b>5</b> 00 241 22	107 14 161 10	107 10 100 0	222 24 222 5
<b>700</b> 241:23	127:14 161:10	137:10 138:8	222:24 223:5
271:3,25	<b>90</b> 31:19,23	140:12 141:8	223:18,20
<b>700,000</b> 248:14	83:12,12	142:23 144:7	224:3,12,24
<b>72</b> 70:20	147:25 149:13	144:16 145:1	260:3,6,10,15
152:17	150:17 182:21	146:6 155:23	269:12,17
<b>75</b> 218:12	182:22 183:24	177:4 186:24	283:11
283:15	184:24 185:8	187:16 197:10	abandonments
<b>750</b> 49:8,13	186:10 187:2	218:19 220:1,6	24:1
59:6 60:3,7	214:13,14	220:10 232:20	abcs 175:11
105:14 121:23	227:18 261:22	240:18,19	ability 13:17
122:23 190:25	261:23 263:1,8	241:22 242:13	28:24 164:23
225:18	263:11,25	248:20 249:1	165:7 265:11
<b>78</b> 4:20	264:5 265:4	266:19 267:7	288:11
<b>79</b> 4:8	277:14,19,24	abandoning	<b>able</b> 23:2 40:12
8	283:18	31:19 205:23	40:18 45:9
<b>8</b> 123:8 127:13	<b>90233</b> 3:10	211:18	87:19 94:17
176:18 262:24	<b>95</b> 201:22	abandonment	100:17 102:21
<b>80</b> 8:22 141:15	267:3	17:6 23:23	112:18 116:14
222:2 240:21	<b>98.5</b> 164:15	25:23 62:1,9	145:12 147:9
<b>80s</b> 231:1	<b>99</b> 147:25	62:10,12 63:14	150:24 159:24
<b>84</b> 252:2	148:2,2	65:1,23 66:4	164:24 165:7
<b>85</b> 226:4	<b>99.5</b> 147:22	67:23 71:10,13	165:10 169:4
	a	73:14,17	169:17 185:1
		137:13 138:5	202:8 203:25
<b>87</b> 279:7,13,15	<b>a.m.</b> 5:1 78:2	138:12,23	228:19 234:25
<b>87102</b> 3:5	250:3 255:9	142:14 143:4	268:18 270:10
288:18	<b>aaron</b> 2:23	143:15 155:21	285:20
<b>87199</b> 3:10	14:21 135:12	155:21 156:15	above 43:6
<b>87501</b> 2:4 3:14	<b>abandon</b> 72:14	156:23 157:6,8	67:5
<b>87504</b> 2:22	73:16 113:6	158:18 177:6	abroad 14:19
<b>87505</b> 2:11	221:3 266:3	178:16 186:20	absolutely
<b>88202</b> 2:16	abandoned	187:4,19	36:21 38:14
9	62:2 63:7,10	188:11,20	52:4 113:20
<b>9</b> 41:10,18	64:15 65:21,25	190:4,5 197:20	119:18 125:4,6
84:17 127:13	66:3,11,17 67:17,19 137:8	204:14 219:15	191:9 192:20

# [absolutely - address]

197:4 226:1	accounts	actively 187:18	214:11,21
227:12 246:21	279:20 280:2	217:15	253:9
<b>abstract</b> 191:24	280:10	actives 58:25	added 30:15
214:25	accurate 39:14	59:2	71:21 121:11
<b>abuse</b> 19:16	48:17 90:1	activities	140:15 226:19
31:24 76:8	171:16	111:15,18	241:24 242:4
126:9,16	acknowledges	113:2 181:6	adding 30:7
129:19	219:9	actor 267:1,20	182:6 190:3,14
abusers 129:24	acloutier 2:17	actors 229:3,6	194:25 198:18
accelerating	acquire 209:4	229:8 266:23	208:25 210:18
283:11	acquisition	284:4	225:8
accepted 28:5	199:19 203:15	actual 140:6	addition 127:4
29:7,15	203:22	153:22 173:3	173:11 199:18
access 187:25	acquisitions	187:19 207:10	205:17
188:3 203:20	201:9 217:3	216:5 223:11	additional
286:13,18,24	acre 141:13,14	237:19 274:1	22:23,25 24:1
accomplish	141:15,23	actually 16:7	24:12 25:5
106:25	acronym 54:6	17:14 20:12	44:5 64:2
accordance	act 223:13	27:24 30:21	72:11 84:3
62:12 155:24	230:23 258:8	43:6,17 73:2	91:10 94:1
157:8	275:5	77:23 96:22	101:24 112:24
account 165:4	action 85:3,17	139:8 142:6	128:2,7 131:25
165:9 184:7	187:2	166:8 173:4	132:11 201:4
186:6 207:1	actions 247:8	216:1 218:16	210:18 213:23
237:21 273:1	active 16:21	218:25 221:24	217:22 222:4
278:23 279:3	17:3 54:19	230:17 252:6	241:23 246:23
accountability	56:20,21 58:21	262:22 274:4	271:3
13:19	64:15 69:16,20	281:3	additions
accountable	69:22 70:4,9	<b>adam</b> 2:22 52:6	138:21 140:14
27:10,15	71:3 196:5,8	add 11:5 23:25	178:20
221:12 252:21	196:14,15,18	24:12 25:20	additives
284:3	197:15 198:2	30:19 60:17	234:10
accounting	199:7 220:7	127:4 190:9	address 28:7,10
201:8	276:3	196:19,21	90:2 101:17
		213:15 214:2	217:19 234:15

## [address - agree]

239:10 284:4	95:21 126:24	advanced 47:4	<b>afraid</b> 254:17
addressed	172:20 183:11	237:19	afternoon
162:13,15	224:15 241:2	advancements	61:10 135:11
208:23	258:9 279:10	237:7,13,23	147:3 155:14
addresses	280:13	advancing	163:15,17
25:12 30:21	administrator	236:13	167:2 175:5
32:16 34:4	5:17	adversely	241:15 248:3
36:25	admission 78:8	247:9	254:2
addressing	78:10,14	advocate 240:1	age 206:3
34:9 169:18	<b>admit</b> 146:13	278:5	236:13
adds 208:5	238:4 251:12	<b>affect</b> 53:9 54:3	agencies
adequate 240:8	admitted 4:19	118:3,20	269:23 279:5
242:21	78:19,21	207:16 223:19	<b>agency</b> 219:18
adequately	146:18,19	247:9 254:18	269:21
18:17	238:11,13	affected 48:15	agency's 221:5
adjourned	<b>adopt</b> 58:13	48:15 123:17	ages 244:3,5
287:8	112:23 169:5	affects 118:5	<b>ago</b> 43:23 93:9
adjudicatory	172:16 173:15	affiliated 211:2	164:14 266:20
139:22	188:15 217:11	<b>affirm</b> 5:13	agrankin 2:23
adjunct 8:4	225:16 240:2	6:15 7:22 9:23	<b>agree</b> 22:7 48:8
adjusting 61:22	240:25 243:1	11:24 15:5	58:13 64:8
adjustment	249:17	136:1 174:19	70:3 71:2,5
69:2 71:6	adopted 172:18	216:11 239:4	74:10,12,20
adjustments	182:1 184:1,6	239:20 241:12	75:17 79:14,23
25:21 69:18,24	203:8 207:17	243:13 246:6	84:22 85:12,17
70:5 71:8	214:22 225:25	247:23 250:19	86:11,16 87:16
128:7	242:5 261:1,16	254:8 288:3,7	89:12,22 90:1
administrate	adopting 182:1	288:12	90:11,11 91:5
216:25	194:20	affirmation	91:19 92:9,11
administrates	adoption	288:1	92:15 93:2,16
224:23	213:22	affirmative	94:4,4,11
administration	<b>adopts</b> 170:17	210:20 212:18	96:16 97:2,15
162:13 258:22	173:2	<b>afford</b> 252:25	98:2,23 100:2
administrative	advance 17:21	affording	100:14,16
76:5 92:21		246:16	101:13,25

# [agree - amplified]

102:1,10 103:5	122:20 136:4	alleviate 95:4	altogether 58:8
104:2,3,16	160:21 251:17	95:24	amazing
107:24 108:3	ai 186:3 236:14	alleviated	139:12
108:15 109:25	280:19	95:21	ambiguous
110:7,10 123:4	<b>air</b> 136:14	<b>allow</b> 36:15	51:4 55:6
125:18 127:1	248:17 249:3,6	46:17,18 74:14	<b>amend</b> 64:10
130:19 131:3	249:7,9,11,18	74:24 75:7	209:15
132:3 148:4	252:2,5 253:12	140:25 145:18	amending
156:21 157:2	alaska 204:16	146:5 192:1	197:15
161:8 171:20	albert 1:21	224:2 226:23	amendment
217:18 229:4	albuquerque	270:15,22	69:17 224:15
242:18 266:7	3:5,10 248:5	allowance 74:8	amendments
267:5 269:17	288:18	allowed 25:20	1:10 61:16
271:12 272:24	alexander 76:1	46:1,4 95:22	62:16 73:24
273:5,7 274:7	158:14 234:16	128:9 133:6,12	74:14 155:20
274:21 275:2,9	234:19,21	170:4 273:19	177:5 178:20
275:14 276:14	alexander's	allowing 37:25	226:17 230:23
277:6,18 278:9	75:19 113:11	69:18 131:16	america 228:13
agreed 29:22	126:4 147:8	215:22	amount 37:8
50:25 92:25	164:13	allows 6:14	67:6 69:16
105:19 124:17	<b>alicia</b> 249:23	95:2 286:13	70:9,25 98:24
128:18 157:2	249:24 250:5	alluded 22:16	113:17 147:19
agreement	250:17	<b>aloud</b> 69:13	156:16,20
36:19 45:10,16	<b>align</b> 178:12	alternate	190:25 191:11
45:18,23 61:18	192:6 196:21	285:25	196:12 233:12
agreements	198:19 214:15	alternative	260:4,9 265:10
50:17 51:3	215:3 217:6	87:21 196:17	272:22 275:10
185:5 203:22	249:16 277:9	197:22 201:18	276:8,11
agrees 94:24	aligned 36:17	alternatively	285:10,19
95:13 161:5	36:17 184:3	101:19 205:20	amounts 66:12
ahead 7:24	<b>alike</b> 195:8	alternatives	69:19,21
9:25 12:1 15:8	<b>alison</b> 11:15,17	177:10 196:13	192:18 207:7
18:11 30:11	11:21 12:3	201:11 222:3	amplified
32:25 40:3	allege 27:21	227:21 232:5	195:4
78:9 87:7		237:22	

# [ampomah - approach]

ampomah 1:22	answered 89:9	220:20	215:2 219:7,25
4:11,15 120:24	165:12	applicant's	230:12 255:21
121:1,8 134:1	anticipate	16:18 52:6	258:24 261:1
134:12 159:8,9	231:6	62:16 69:3	261:16
159:12,15	anytime 6:22	70:18,18,20	application
163:6 164:1	anyway 250:9	75:7 77:1	15:19 55:11
amuse 175:8	apodaca 5:18	122:22 123:9	74:13,14
analogy 54:21	5:20 239:9	147:8 155:19	115:21 183:3
analysis 60:7	apologies 68:6	178:1 179:4,20	183:13 218:14
80:3 82:7,11	108:25	188:10 193:22	<b>applied</b> 53:21
82:13,14,24	apologize	196:19 209:15	56:23 75:21
83:3 91:12	143:19 157:4	218:14,17,18	219:17
92:22 93:13,13	162:19 177:23	218:22 219:21	<b>applies</b> 64:24
94:17 118:24	189:14	219:24 221:4	70:1 156:7
119:5,17,21	<b>app</b> 281:13	256:13 265:10	199:6
122:9 218:15	apparent 84:23	279:8	apply 25:18,22
221:15 222:24	apparently	applicants 2:2	33:11 71:24
258:21 259:3	5:25	15:20 28:4,18	73:15 183:11
analyze 94:1	appealable	29:7,15 36:17	187:5 229:23
anderson 10:9	51:14	36:19 45:6	applying 54:25
andrew 2:17	<b>appear</b> 259:21	51:1 52:1	237:22 259:24
ann 2:18	260:20	61:11,15,25	appointed 5:4
announced	appears 215:6	63:2 70:3 71:6	appreciate
70:1	appendix 4:21	71:12,23 73:10	61:17 114:1
annual 28:18	4:21 238:5,6	73:25 77:4	124:11 128:24
29:1,1,2,5	238:14,15	114:16 147:5	163:22,25
103:5,9,20	applicable	156:22 164:14	165:16 166:17
211:3	54:15 131:5	167:25 168:11	171:19 219:3
annually	161:24 216:12	170:18 171:10	287:3
225:18	applicant 29:21	178:21 179:23	approach
answer 74:4	109:14 120:13	191:19 192:11	52:15 54:24
90:8 118:9	124:13 126:3	194:21 197:15	105:24 115:24
124:10,24	127:17 131:23	198:11,25	196:1 201:15
153:6 157:2	158:15 187:1	200:16 201:11	278:6 283:8
	219:2,18	207:18 209:25	

# [approaches - assisted]

approaches	73:14 92:4	arizona 243:20	asking 7:5
47:4 215:23	132:14 133:17	arms 180:23	100:6 106:12
appropriate	155:23 157:7	artesia 243:21	142:21 148:1
24:20 27:14	159:19 187:3	243:22 244:7	151:6 154:1
35:16 49:3	188:20 189:9	244:11 245:2	156:9 162:23
			247:2
51:11 55:3	189:19 197:9	arthur 4:16,21	
58:19,22 59:1	212:8 223:17	172:23 174:13	aspect 96:1,4
59:6 60:15,23	223:20 269:16	175:1,5,13,20	aspects 99:11
75:3 93:17	approves 72:13	176:16,20	assertion
122:2 125:13	approving 74:7	177:16 179:14	223:22
131:16 262:14	approximately	181:21 184:17	assertions
270:11 278:20	240:16	188:8 206:8	171:10
appropriately	arbitrary	228:7 230:11	assess 237:16
46:14 52:14	224:21 226:21	237:2,25 238:5	280:7 281:3
approval 64:2	279:18,25	238:13 255:12	assessing
73:16,20 74:1	archaeologist	255:19 287:2,7	219:10 268:17
74:9,13,22	241:17	arthur's 238:5	assessment
75:2 131:7	<b>area</b> 29:11	articulate	80:3 120:2
137:25 138:4	51:24 90:16	87:25	279:20 280:2
184:4 188:23	159:3 230:20	articulated	280:10
189:1	233:16 243:24	81:17	assessments
approvals	244:17 245:14	artificial 42:23	192:2
36:11,22 122:9	281:5,9 286:16	186:1	<b>asset</b> 192:18
139:17 142:9	<b>areas</b> 16:23	<b>arts</b> 244:1	203:22 215:25
204:13 227:3	168:23 169:2	asked 38:1	278:13 280:8
approve 24:9	192:3 231:20	40:20 43:1	assets 22:18
35:16 72:22	231:21 235:8	50:15 83:9	145:1 203:25
73:4	<b>argue</b> 46:18	93:9 106:11	204:2,19,23
approved 24:1	73:4 87:21	108:8 114:14	209:6,7
24:5,11,25	234:25	116:8,15 120:8	<b>assign</b> 134:23
37:9 45:25	arguing 235:14	150:15 157:1	assigned
61:20 62:11,18	argument	158:12,25	225:23
63:7 64:18	128:5	159:16 168:11	assist 141:2
65:22 66:3	arguments	168:15 259:17	assisted 256:11
71:10,13,24	21:10 169:15	282:23	

## [assoc - awkward]

assoc 2:14	195:4,22 196:2	attempted	available 8:22
associated	196:5,7,16,18	204:16	60:18 61:2
142:11 182:4	197:6,12,17,19	attempting	93:12 206:6
205:22 249:9	198:3,22 199:1	236:2	232:5 256:3
association 3:3	199:21 200:15	attention	265:14 268:5
148:11 167:10	200:17,25	281:18	272:22
assume 83:10	201:3,5,17	attorney 61:11	ave 2:4 3:14
85:16 90:17	202:17 203:11	147:4 149:8	average 147:15
97:7 103:19	205:11,12,17	186:15 187:12	147:17 197:13
150:9 151:7	206:10 207:17	258:3	197:23 213:21
229:12 262:6	213:17 214:19	attorneys	216:19,23
assumed	215:9,12,20,22	133:22 134:24	232:3 248:13
272:25	216:12 217:13	167:6	275:13,22
assuming	219:12 220:21	atucker 2:24	276:7
101:20 153:18	221:23 222:5,8	<b>audit</b> 216:25	averages 221:5
assumption	222:8 227:3,6	aunt's 252:2	277:9
54:1 85:15	227:20 238:22	author 256:5	avoid 76:8
265:25	268:5 274:24	authority 26:13	87:11 123:18
assumptions	275:4,10 276:3	35:5,15 137:12	126:8 162:24
236:22	278:23 279:8	138:22 169:3	213:20 216:13
assurance 5:7	282:21	169:10,13	216:14 262:14
16:18,21 24:23	assurances	218:5 219:11	265:12
25:6 55:15	25:19 36:10	219:14,23	avoiding
58:1 59:25	67:8 69:20	271:2	280:12
61:20 62:17	168:16 173:5	authorize	awaiting
63:16 65:19	206:16 240:4,9	29:20 168:15	185:25
66:11,16 67:14	assuring	authorized	aware 36:7
67:24 68:1,14	192:23,24	27:6	75:15 102:17
69:16,18,21,24	ata 188:25	automatic	109:19 129:13
70:1,9,24 77:5	192:2 214:15	223:4 224:19	138:6 149:12
101:20 104:16	atripp 2:18	226:21	149:21 151:8
123:13 168:13	attached 16:7	automatically	159:17 272:16
173:8 177:9,11	<b>attain</b> 118:21	224:6 225:2	278:21,25
178:7 190:16	attempt 20:21	<b>ava</b> 247:17	awkward 174:3
192:14,16,17	65:8	248:4	

## [b - behalf]

b	backstop	barrels 47:16	237:17 258:7
	205:17	86:13 87:1,2	259:23 271:18
<b>b</b> 4:20 16:8	<b>bad</b> 21:25 22:1	89:18 92:8	272:25,25
72:9 73:13	22:6 40:9	99:25 105:14	273:17 276:2,7
78:11,13,16,21 138:22 250:18	172:14 208:8	143:24 149:13	276:9 277:9
	229:3,6,8	151:10 165:21	278:5,12,17
bachelor 244:1 bachelor's 10:5	253:2 266:23	194:3,5 228:17	279:2 281:3
	267:1,20 284:4	232:24 277:20	282:4
<b>back</b> 10:15 14:12 20:13	bakken 194:5	285:16	<b>basic</b> 207:23
37:19 41:21	194:10 235:8	barriers 207:6	<b>basin</b> 242:11
44:2 57:24	236:3	<b>base</b> 76:11	266:12 286:16
67:22 68:6	balance 164:11	275:16	<b>basis</b> 46:24
73:2 74:17	178:10 272:8	<b>based</b> 28:3,8	63:21 100:1
75:14 78:1,3	balanced 12:11	35:13 44:8	103:5 104:25
79:2 81:21	balancing	48:5,23,24	123:6 127:12
88:16 89:21	284:21 285:1	51:24 52:22	129:13 148:21
90:21 91:15	ballpark 55:22	56:1,11 76:4,6	175:23 195:7
96:25 98:10	<b>bank</b> 276:24	94:10 105:11	203:12 208:17
105:13 122:18	bankrupt	114:13,14,17	216:16 265:19
141:16 144:9	276:19,21,24	118:22 123:7	<b>bates</b> 69:12
144:13 147:18	bankruptcies	126:22 160:2	<b>battery</b> 268:23
148:10 159:10	267:16,24,24	162:10 173:15	<b>bear</b> 242:16
162:20 163:18	bankruptcy	178:7 181:5	246:18
164:15 169:6	107:14 267:9	191:3,20	beatty 3:4
171:11 197:11	267:19 277:1	194:23 196:8	167:4
204:17 209:7	<b>barely</b> 246:16	197:18 201:18	beautiful 8:2
219:5 229:25	<b>bargain</b> 80:12	201:23 202:13	8:25 252:19
230:20 231:9	barnett 235:9	206:18,19	becoming
238:17 239:9	<b>barred</b> 227:5	207:9 209:8	276:16
247:11 262:13	barrel 42:12	213:23 215:13	<b>beginning</b> 7:9
backbone	98:3 190:20	215:23 216:22	23:25 123:11
167:12	228:18 232:23	216:23 217:9	199:5
background	265:7 267:21	217:11 218:3,5	<b>begun</b> 164:19
136:18 176:15	267:23 276:20	222:7,8 224:20	<b>behalf</b> 241:17
181:20		225:9 227:19	248:4,5 255:25

## [behavior - bit]

behavior 20:20	believed 68:11	263:23 265:3	<b>biden</b> 251:16
42:2	<b>believer</b> 161:12	265:12 269:10	<b>big</b> 19:20,23
<b>belief</b> 128:7	282:17	269:15 277:23	20:2 112:10
<b>believe</b> 14:10	believes 19:2	283:4 285:11	115:10 254:25
18:14,16 24:2	130:20	286:4	267:25 282:17
28:21 29:6,9	beneficial	beneficiaries	<b>bigger</b> 44:22
32:4 34:5	18:13,15,16,16	165:24	205:24 285:20
37:10 38:6	32:23 45:21	benefit 18:1	<b>biggest</b> 165:2
49:5 50:4 51:1	72:1,12 75:10	43:22 93:25	235:22 237:13
51:3 52:16	75:14 91:11,20	119:2 139:6	<b>bill</b> 101:23
53:10,19 56:19	94:25 97:5	140:23 205:8	249:13
57:21 58:10	122:15 130:11	218:21 220:3	<b>billion</b> 195:14
63:18,20 80:19	130:13,16	220:11 259:15	195:18 236:6
84:15 85:5	143:7,11	benefited	240:16 242:3
86:2 89:14	145:15 153:19	167:20 244:19	248:22,23
96:17,17	161:1 162:5	<b>benefits</b> 244:17	249:13 272:1
100:20 101:18	168:12 176:25	best 13:17 27:9	<b>billions</b> 103:3,6
100:20 101:10	177:1,2 179:16	30:4 37:18	103:12,13,14
104:24 114:22	179:17,20,21	80:2 141:25	169:23 249:14
121:14,17	179:22,23	171:9 180:12	<b>bills</b> 246:16
122:14 123:11	180:1,2,11,13	180:20 270:12	<b>bio</b> 268:25
123:15 125:7	180:14 181:5,8	288:10	269:1
126:20 128:17	181:23,24	<b>better</b> 13:9	bipartisan
129:17 138:25	182:7,7,15,20	26:18 43:24	222:19
140:19 146:11	183:10,21	48:4 58:4	bit 20:25 27:5
156:15,17,25	185:9,17,20	92:23 94:15	29:24,25 40:6
157:15 160:7	186:4,13 187:9	106:1 107:6	48:20 53:16
160:25 162:11	189:9,18 190:9	110:1,8 124:25	56:24 79:14,18
162:18 191:7	196:22 198:20	125:23 134:15	92:25 96:22
209:17 221:2	206:6 213:12	178:9 192:6	99:6,13 102:4
225:24 246:21	213:13,14	202:11 205:23	104:1 123:10
259:12 261:4	214:3,11 226:5	214:15	133:19 138:14
261:24 266:5	226:13,20,24	<b>beyond</b> 181:5	139:7,21 141:6
268:10	260:19,20	188:25 219:22	152:4,5 153:2
	261:6,6,17,20	220:11	156:14 164:14
	, , - , -		

## [bit - briefly]

182:12 189:4	<b>blue</b> 63:3 71:20	58:25 60:10	<b>border</b> 202:7
197:18 198:7	94:14	64:20 123:18	202:21
200:18 214:1	<b>board</b> 191:16	154:20 155:3,5	<b>bore</b> 153:20
252:7	206:25 221:15	196:13 197:1	<b>born</b> 10:3
<b>black</b> 73:20	228:25 229:23	198:5,11 199:9	<b>bothers</b> 180:25
blanket 17:7	233:24 266:22	200:23 201:8	<b>bottom</b> 10:21
24:17 25:2,5	276:1	202:23 203:13	35:10 81:15
25:18 46:1	<b>boe</b> 49:4 59:5	203:15 204:10	143:21 147:17
64:16,23 66:10	83:12 92:11	204:12,16,23	<b>bought</b> 79:24
67:7,13 69:16	121:23 182:22	207:7 215:14	209:6
69:20,21 70:9	191:12 225:18	215:23 216:3	<b>bouncing</b> 70:15
70:24 104:11	225:18 261:23	216:22,23	<b>box</b> 2:16,21
104:16 105:2	264:5,6,16	217:5,12	3:10
105:20 128:8	265:1,4 277:14	227:21,25	<b>boy</b> 88:4
155:3 177:10	277:24 285:11	241:18 242:6	250:18
196:1,12,17	<b>boes</b> 125:22	243:2 247:6,13	<b>bradfute</b> 3:9,11
197:12,21,23	<b>bomhoff</b> 250:7	248:7,15	bradfutelaw.c
200:17 201:3,5	250:17,18,21	249:17 278:5	3:11,12
201:11 202:23	250:24 253:20	278:12	bradley 97:13
207:8 213:20	254:8,11	<b>bonds</b> 12:19	brandon 262:2
213:21 216:9	<b>bond</b> 7:9 17:7	53:1 55:23	breadth 52:18
216:11,15,19	24:17 25:2,5	65:13 173:4,4	119:11
216:21,23	46:2 64:16,24	173:10 201:9	<b>break</b> 77:20
217:5 221:2	128:8 195:25	213:20 216:9	78:4 104:1
227:20 268:3	196:1,17	216:16,19	134:20 174:4,6
276:2	197:21,23	221:2 242:22	174:6,8 238:16
blessed 244:9	201:11 207:8	248:11 268:3	287:5
<b>blight</b> 242:14	213:21 221:17	<b>boom</b> 231:7	<b>breaks</b> 244:11
<b>blip</b> 41:15	227:22	234:20 235:14	<b>bridge</b> 115:21
<b>blm</b> 180:12	<b>bonded</b> 56:22	235:20,22,24	180:8
<b>bloom</b> 1:21	bonding 6:25	237:9,9 251:13	<b>brief</b> 209:24
4:15 17:12	7:3 12:10,17	251:23,23,25	briefly 22:13
134:4,5,7	13:8,15,20	252:24	22:16 28:13
163:9,11,14,21	14:2 17:4,7	<b>booms</b> 237:14	52:11 55:18
163:23 166:10	24:1,12 58:22		67:22 111:12

# [briefly - capable]

112.0 100.10	hudasta 124.2	huginaga 0.10	254.6
113:9 188:18	<b>budgets</b> 124:3 125:8	<b>business</b> 9:10	254:6
197:7		14:5 27:13	calculation
<b>bring</b> 71:16	<b>buffer</b> 208:4,14	39:20 44:11	49:17,24
100:17 121:5	209:19	79:19 81:1	calculations
153:10 159:10	<b>build</b> 275:19,19	82:3,16,18	53:24,25 259:7
160:10 161:3,8	<b>building</b> 1:5	103:18 113:21	calculus 92:12
165:7	180:8 237:4	119:22 197:4	california 10:4
<b>bringing</b> 144:9	245:5 275:19	198:8 204:15	204:10,15
144:13 161:11	<b>built</b> 124:11	204:25 207:5,5	243:19 244:3
173:3	180:7	210:22 211:6	268:20
<b>brings</b> 193:16	<b>bull</b> 243:25	211:13 212:20	<b>call</b> 15:18
<b>broad</b> 26:20,21	<b>bullet</b> 137:22	213:2 247:7	26:15 30:5
47:1 48:21	<b>bullets</b> 137:10	252:24 267:17	37:25 40:2
57:22 117:11	<b>bump</b> 41:14	282:16	46:16 82:10
217:25 224:4	74:17 86:8	businesses 8:2	84:17 94:13,14
224:25	<b>bunch</b> 35:10	170:25 282:17	105:15 166:23
broader 34:20	81:18 176:9	<b>busy</b> 257:18	called 11:14
48:18 83:1,23	256:19 282:16	<b>button</b> 6:13,19	96:20 156:15
194:17	burden 8:20	112:10	156:18,19
<b>broke</b> 20:12	12:23 57:15	<b>buy</b> 79:20	<b>calls</b> 30:1
252:3	59:24 92:20,21	<b>buyer</b> 80:11	<b>camera</b> 6:13,14
<b>broken</b> 97:25	93:10 94:3,21	81:25 219:15	6:19 134:8
brought 19:22	94:22 95:22	<b>buying</b> 80:4,6	<b>cancel</b> 173:10
42:6 49:6	120:16 158:20	bwenergylaw	candidacy
108:6 129:16	212:23 216:6	3:6,7	284:23
167:25 170:8	burdened	c	<b>canyon</b> 96:15
171:5 184:16	117:19	<b>c</b> 2:1 3:1 4:20	96:24
202:14 212:7	burdens 57:22	7:20 30:6,14	<b>cap</b> 25:19
<b>brunt</b> 246:19	117:2,12	,	66:23,25 67:15
<b>bs</b> 136:20	213:24	30:18,18,22,22	69:15 70:4
<b>budget</b> 103:9	burdensome	31:1,2,8 70:2	71:3,7 158:17
103:15,20	26:8 29:2	70:12,13,14,18	capability
budgeted 124:5	188:24	70:22 71:1,2	87:15
budgeting	<b>burned</b> 69:9	137:1 140:14	capable 153:16
124:8 125:5		146:13,18,19	182:19 185:9
		247:22 250:17	

## [capable - certainly]

106 10 061 00	05.7.110.17.17	4 1 22 2 44 2	1 60 5 0 45 1
186:13 261:20	85:7 119:17,17	catch 23:3 44:2	163:5 245:1
capacity	120:18 127:12	130:3 156:13	caused 96:22
185:23 186:4	127:12 128:9	catching 22:5	252:16
capital 12:21	129:12,12	categories	causing 38:21
84:6 118:5	131:6,6 141:4	47:24 67:6	<b>caverns</b> 243:25
125:5 203:20	143:12 161:15	69:24 93:18,24	<b>cc15</b> 96:20
218:2	165:8 169:12	97:5 194:11	<b>cease</b> 81:19
capture 22:25	172:2 173:13	206:2 231:12	<b>cedar</b> 96:15,24
50:22 107:6	176:21 192:2,2	categorize	cement 24:7
220:18 225:10	211:19 216:16	93:25 120:5	cementing
captured 22:24	226:20,20	264:14	137:25
46:1	232:17 235:1	categorized	center 2:3
captures	255:11,21	17:2	61:12 147:5
219:22	256:18 259:11	category 16:24	255:21
<b>car</b> 89:1	259:19,23,25	16:25 20:22	<b>centers</b> 236:14
<b>carbon</b> 220:18	260:17 263:5	21:23 44:13	centric 39:15
274:18	266:25 279:19	45:25 48:23	cents 250:11,13
carc 244:4	279:19 280:1,1	49:20 50:10	253:9
<b>care</b> 94:14	280:10,10	53:14 56:13	certain 19:21
166:10 247:14	282:20,20	57:18 58:2,7	26:23 61:18
<b>careful</b> 9:4 22:2	<b>cases</b> 33:20	58:11 59:13,17	63:1 79:16
22:4 44:12,20	41:3 93:2	83:15 92:13	93:3 94:14
46:22	145:25 176:3	94:9,14,21	98:24 105:6
carefully 76:7	228:11 229:5	95:25 100:23	113:17 127:20
126:8	257:15,19,25	104:6,8,9	147:16,18
cares 246:12	258:2 274:8	105:5 118:11	156:16,20
253:3	285:17	119:20 120:6	168:18,23
carlsbad	<b>cash</b> 191:23	123:18 156:10	260:4
243:25	casing 24:7	194:18 219:12	certainly 6:8
<b>carry</b> 12:12	84:24 85:4,9	264:11	121:17 126:18
cascade 224:4	85:12,13,18	caught 44:5	165:16 198:7
case 14:13,20	88:2 113:23	<b>cause</b> 18:22	203:10 204:9
24:6 33:9 38:1	137:25 142:20	20:24 32:5	211:19 231:6
38:12 40:9,11	189:10 202:8	137:17 153:10	232:9 234:7
44:8,16 54:24	269:6	153:11 159:18	259:14

# [certainty - citizen]

	T	I	1
certainty 32:10	chang 1:21	177:3,11,12	cheaper 221:4
32:11	41:20 134:17	187:15,18	cheaply 206:23
certificate 4:23	134:18,22	188:10,22	<b>check</b> 28:25
certification	166:11,12	189:6,22,24	31:14 133:16
26:11 27:10	259:15,20	192:18 200:5	cheese 8:3
28:22 50:14	change 19:12	200:15 201:1	chemical
210:19,20	19:16,23 22:8	202:17 203:8	234:10
211:3 212:18	26:1,6 28:15	204:4,8 207:15	<b>chief</b> 172:3
213:24 217:25	29:11,19,20	209:24 221:23	173:14 257:3
222:16	31:2,3,15,17	223:18,19,20	child 7:4
certifications	45:19 50:14	224:13 226:11	children
29:20 211:16	109:20 113:5	241:19 242:6	244:19
217:22	123:20 132:5,8	248:8 284:19	<b>chill</b> 212:16
certified 176:8	133:14 139:23	changing 31:18	chino 1:5
certifying 27:4	142:16 158:21	106:11 214:13	choices 117:2
<b>cetera</b> 137:25	177:15 186:18	chapter 248:6	117:13,15
176:4 181:9	196:18 199:16	characteristics	118:19
chair 1:21	200:16 208:12	279:21 280:3	<b>choose</b> 41:16
41:20 134:16	210:9,12,19	280:11	193:19 227:9
134:18,22	211:13 226:10	characterizati	chooses 31:8
166:11,12	229:24,25	89:23 218:18	<b>chose</b> 153:18
167:3 248:3	243:4 254:14	219:25	<b>chosen</b> 203:3
259:15,20	changed 26:2	characterize	<b>chris</b> 2:12
challenge	27:3 28:21	89:7 102:25	chris.moander
192:25 208:18	37:14,16 74:21	characterized	2:13
270:22	123:11	189:23	christian
challenged	changes 7:1	<b>charge</b> 252:23	246:12
117:1 210:23	16:5,13 17:23	<b>chart</b> 63:24	circle 112:4
challenges	20:6 21:19	75:16	circumstance
211:10	26:5 28:5	charter 10:16	142:24
chamber 12:5,6	29:16,17 31:6	charts 69:9	circumstances
13:19	33:3 37:13,20	chase 84:3	277:4
<b>chance</b> 234:4	109:12 128:13	chased 101:2	<b>citizen</b> 245:24
249:15	133:17 137:3	chasing 35:6	246:11
	142:10,11		

### [citizens - commerce]

citizens 9:9	242:1 247:6	<b>coal</b> 194:14	223:9 238:17
<b>city</b> 245:10,15	248:23 249:13	<b>code</b> 224:24	239:12 253:4
<b>claims</b> 221:16	252:16	241:2 258:9	281:12 286:21
231:14	<b>clear</b> 8:17,19	codifies 224:15	<b>comes</b> 176:24
clarification	18:2 23:6	collaborative	197:11 251:6
25:16 79:6	24:14 25:22,25	173:24	266:1
82:4	27:7 33:16,24	collapse 245:2	coming 27:2
clarifications	38:11 42:10	collapses 245:9	61:17 131:12
16:6,13 137:3	50:4 51:5,10	collapsing	133:15,15
189:23,24	53:20 74:5,21	122:14 223:24	171:21 172:7
clarify 28:9	74:25 81:4	colleague 167:5	182:11 265:24
104:19	119:10 130:25	167:20	command
clarifying	168:2	collectively	250:8
132:13	clearer 27:14	193:6	comment 5:9
<b>clarity</b> 133:23	28:2	college 10:18	5:10,17 7:2
223:23 224:5	clearly 51:8	11:1 244:5	11:12 14:8,11
<b>class</b> 197:14	99:18 144:9	<b>collin</b> 254:1,5	96:2 126:10
268:25 269:1	click 96:18,25	colorado	230:16 238:17
classic 42:1	clicked 86:4	202:20 204:21	238:23 239:8
classification	clients 236:4	204:25 253:1	243:3 249:23
105:9 214:24	<b>climate</b> 252:18	<b>column</b> 99:25	250:2 253:22
classroom	<b>close</b> 56:16	combination	255:8 263:19
244:4	closely 36:16	49:22	263:20 281:23
<b>clean</b> 7:4,12	270:23	combined 64:1	287:6
8:25 9:6 30:5	closes 7:7	<b>come</b> 5:9 7:11	commentary
240:18 241:22	<b>closing</b> 203:15	27:4 45:16,18	259:23
246:22 248:19	228:6	45:23 49:1	commented
249:11,20	cloutier 2:17	58:16 59:5	53:7
252:25	4:9 111:4,7,9	76:17 77:7	commenters
cleaned 241:23	111:11 114:1,5	78:1 79:7	238:24,25
273:22	158:3,4	81:20 127:11	comments 5:14
cleaning 7:8	<b>club</b> 6:24 248:6	133:9,10	230:12 239:1,7
246:19	<b>co2</b> 47:3 132:20	141:16 147:18	266:17
cleanup 6:25	220:17 269:2	148:5,10	commerce 12:5
7:3 240:13		194:10 208:19	

# [commercial - compliance]

commercial	239:4 251:1	communities	company's
269:1	279:18,25	13:4 242:14	107:22,25
commission 1:3	283:20 288:5	248:25 249:5	compare
1:20,23 2:9 5:5	commission's	community	122:22 193:23
5:12,17 16:3	18:1 176:14	10:16,18	compared
16:17 31:8	214:4	244:19 245:14	201:18 202:17
40:18 52:3	commissioner	community's	218:17
54:24 58:3,12	4:11,15,15	14:5	comparison
76:1 96:20	17:12 109:6,11	companies	193:17 264:25
112:23 115:20	120:24 121:1,8	12:16 13:14	competes 13:13
121:14 125:17	132:4 134:1,4	53:21 54:5	competitive
127:7,18	134:5,7 155:15	125:8 160:10	13:12
128:22 133:23	159:8,9,12,15	166:2 178:24	complete 43:15
168:11,15,24	163:6,9,11,14	200:7 204:24	44:4 112:4,20
169:3,9,17	163:21,23	208:17 209:5	229:24 232:13
170:13,16	166:10	244:10,18,22	270:5
171:19 172:11	commissioners	245:4,13	completed
172:15 173:1	10:1 14:15	246:22 247:7	182:25
173:15,16,19	146:3 167:3	249:13 251:3	completely
176:5 177:20	239:25 241:16	254:19 255:4	8:12 184:10
178:11 181:22	248:3	267:16,25	205:10 253:7
182:8,13,16	committed	268:2 274:17	completes
194:25 195:21	167:15	276:19,21	218:10
202:16,22	committee	282:16	completion
204:6 205:1,4	170:10 218:16	company 82:21	43:21,21,23
206:9 207:12	218:25 248:12	107:18 109:15	185:25 284:24
209:14,24	258:23	110:2 112:9	288:1
213:8,9 214:1	<b>common</b> 95:11	155:1 161:22	completions
214:6,10,12	111:15,18	165:18 166:1	90:20 112:12
215:21 216:11	150:22 237:15	210:5,7 211:6	223:8 232:22
217:5,23	247:2 249:16	211:23,23	286:1
220:25 222:3,6	commonly	231:18 232:1	complexities
223:1 225:7	249:8	254:15,18	186:6
226:8,16 228:7	communicati	276:23,24	compliance
229:5 234:17	37:19		19:3 26:24

## [compliance - conservation]

27:17,21,22,24	compounding	20:5 22:10,13	279:20 280:2
51:9 80:7	21:4	23:20 25:15	280:11
106:8,19	comprehensive	33:17 34:8,11	conduct 5:5
128:13 140:7	13:6 102:14,19	40:7 52:17	conference
160:10 161:4,9	compression	81:1,8 95:4,24	288:6
178:8 181:11	223:9	100:10 115:16	confirms
185:13 187:4	compromise	117:6,20	219:11,13
198:1 203:18	121:25 122:25	138:10 139:18	conflate 269:8
208:4,14,18,22	168:19	140:1,11	conflict 130:10
209:6,7,19	computer 10:6	159:18 162:12	confused 51:7
210:7,7,20	concept 98:20	168:2,7 172:25	confusion
211:11,25	98:21	178:19 187:15	47:11,14 217:2
212:7,7,19,22	concepts	191:18 194:25	consecutive
212:23 215:24	223:25	198:25 199:15	182:20 190:22
216:24 217:4	concern 17:14	200:25 203:9	198:16 261:21
217:14 218:8	23:6,8 25:17	204:18 208:12	consensus
222:9 223:3	26:20 32:9	218:14 226:9	79:16 121:20
224:1,4,7,25	34:20 81:17,20	228:11	126:1 127:22
227:2,4,10,18	86:17 91:6	conclude	128:16
278:12 280:7	106:14,19	148:24	consequence
281:10 284:3	117:10 119:10	concludes	214:4
compliant	119:15 129:20	238:2	consequences
51:20 58:11	178:25 201:15	conclusions	12:12 20:24
64:5 209:3,4	254:14 279:9	177:17,19,21	41:8 144:22
211:2 212:2,6	283:3	177:24 206:10	203:19 213:1
complicated	concerned 8:11	228:6	217:3 221:22
200:19	9:1 90:13	<b>concur</b> 264:1	225:21 226:21
complies 24:3	113:14 114:19	condition 38:18	246:25
62:13 155:24	166:3 170:5	108:5 178:9	conservation
157:9 224:16	228:4	215:24 278:13	1:3 2:9 5:5
<b>comply</b> 12:17	concerning	280:8	13:7 66:15
components	179:25 200:24	conditioner	149:8 158:24
104:4,20	201:13 226:4	252:3,5	223:13 240:1,2
compound	concerns 17:14	conditions	240:25 288:5
87:11 108:10	17:23 18:10	142:23 187:25	

## [consider - correct]

consider 8:18	consolidation	continuing	converted
9:11,12 123:23	204:22	20:19 287:7	139:11 268:25
127:12 182:13	constantly	continuously	converting
183:18 185:14	27:20 37:13	32:2,5,7	223:3 268:21
189:24 200:12	constitute	129:17,19	268:22
207:12 213:9	87:22	130:4 187:7	converts 224:6
215:23 222:4	constrain 57:25	contours 96:10	convincing
245:16 248:23	58:4	103:24 107:9	252:22
278:12,15	constraint	contract	<b>cooking</b> 251:21
considerable	98:19	208:16	coordinating
242:10	consultant	contractor 8:15	223:8
consideration	234:22 257:20	187:22	<b>copy</b> 137:1
125:17 127:7	consulting 10:9	contradiction	<b>coring</b> 286:25
171:6 191:5	257:4,13	277:18	<b>corner</b> 46:23
241:3	280:22	contrary	corporation
considerations	consumer	187:19 283:20	109:15 242:21
105:7 112:25	25:15 200:22	contribute	corporations
considered 7:1	<b>cont'd</b> 3:1	193:6	7:11 246:19
24:12 46:20	contagious	contributed	248:9
171:5 190:22	17:11	195:11,14	<b>correct</b> 16:8,11
222:22 272:5	contamination	204:14	20:3 21:16,17
considering	282:13	contributes	23:12,13 24:17
14:4 191:22	contemplated	251:7	24:23 25:10,11
205:10 206:3	173:11	contributing	28:5 29:8,22
237:19 265:21	<b>context</b> 191:22	13:1	29:23 30:24
280:7	206:13 214:25	control 5:25	31:8,9 33:19
considers	236:11 267:15	218:4 249:25	33:20 34:3
173:12,18	continent	282:13	35:20,21 37:5
consistency	231:19 232:1	conventional	39:9 47:5 48:6
224:8	continue 41:23	236:12	48:9 49:14,15
consistent	52:1 74:8	conversations	50:1,22 53:14
133:3 226:11	146:10 181:2	19:1 45:13,14	53:18 54:13,16
consistently	252:10	127:2	54:17 55:7,17
283:24 285:2	continued	<b>convert</b> 139:13	56:4,15,18,19
	10:21 141:2		59:18,22 60:2

## [correct - create]

62:3,4,18	264:13 265:4	242:15 248:12	142:9 164:3
63:11,16,17,20	265:13,18	248:13 251:12	165:18 166:1
64:16,21 65:1	266:4 267:7,12	265:20 273:23	<b>court</b> 42:6
65:14 66:23	267:13 268:11	275:7,13,21,22	235:1
67:8 71:14,22	269:14 270:16	276:7,9,11,13	<b>courts</b> 169:14
72:1 73:18,22	270:19 271:6,7	<b>costing</b> 248:14	cover 7:9
74:2,3 75:5	271:14 272:1	<b>costly</b> 23:11	248:11
76:8 77:2,6	272:24 275:3,5	246:23	coverage 201:8
80:8 81:21	276:5,6,8,10	<b>costs</b> 102:16	covered 18:8
84:20,21 85:18	278:6,14	120:11 169:25	23:15 25:2
86:23 87:4	282:22 283:5	201:23 215:25	28:14 60:18
91:22 92:14,22	283:12,22	231:14,20,21	63:9,18,23
94:12 104:23	284:22 285:4	242:1 248:23	65:19 67:25
105:10 107:22	285:15 286:5	251:24 266:17	68:11,13,17
107:23 108:6	288:9	274:1,15 276:1	128:6 216:13
108:16 111:16	correctable	277:8 278:14	covering 70:25
111:23 112:2,3	224:21	280:9	<b>covers</b> 60:16
112:7,13,14,16	correction	council 279:1	71:2 126:24
112:17 113:3,4	66:21	counsel 1:23	<b>covid</b> 90:25
113:7,8,19,24	corrective 85:3	50:13 158:13	252:13 267:21
113:25 114:24	correlative	158:24 262:7	276:20
119:22 120:4	24:21 102:15	<b>count</b> 242:3	<b>cpi</b> 25:18 26:5
120:11 139:23	120:10 283:22	country 176:2	69:2 128:7
139:24 152:10	correspond	260:18 264:20	craft 14:2
154:2 159:21	207:10	<b>counts</b> 217:15	crafted 76:7
159:22 186:13	corroded 269:6	<b>county</b> 176:3	126:8
193:20,21	corrosive	couple 21:9	create 19:23
227:11 230:14	231:24	28:8 52:24	20:21 93:17
255:25 256:1,6	<b>cost</b> 7:9 9:8	58:15 90:2	112:17 179:21
256:7,24 257:5	88:3,3 169:23	105:16 115:12	183:6 187:10
257:9 258:4,5	187:22 195:7	116:9 128:19	217:2 221:24
258:11,25	202:2 206:21	139:2 149:4,11	224:19 227:14
259:4,11,12,25	216:5 221:12	158:8,23 194:2	246:24 247:13
260:16,23	221:16 232:3	course 51:6	249:1 284:9
261:17 264:7	236:6 240:13	99:2 106:4	

## [creates - day]

	I	I	I
creates 197:24	147:1 149:5	244:15 260:19	<b>data</b> 24:7 27:23
198:1 208:20	155:12 189:8	260:21 261:11	33:20 35:5,11
creating 16:24	189:17 208:5	276:4	35:15,16 36:9
57:17 94:21	208:25 209:10	<b>cursor</b> 72:16	43:3,10 95:7
creation 21:23	209:20 255:17	<b>curtis</b> 247:17	99:24 122:12
58:10	crossed 73:12	247:18,21,25	130:1,18 145:9
creative 237:21	127:15 130:17	248:2,4 249:21	147:14,21
creativity	<b>crux</b> 153:25	<b>curve</b> 42:3	148:8,12,18,20
237:6,12	168:8 210:14	<b>curves</b> 229:22	148:22 149:19
credibility	<b>csr</b> 231:17	229:24	152:2 158:20
236:23	cumbersome	<b>cut</b> 105:25	164:13 170:15
<b>credits</b> 274:18	212:22	106:12,13	180:9 184:14
<b>crisis</b> 169:22	curiosity	202:8	201:20 236:14
criteria 42:19	237:12	<b>cutoffs</b> 279:19	237:17,18
46:13 93:5,18	current 43:2	280:1	258:20 259:3
104:22 113:12	48:13 65:7,14	<b>cycle</b> 124:4	278:17 279:2
182:18 183:24	66:5 73:21	<b>cycles</b> 161:13	280:18 281:7
184:24 185:8	74:12 85:20	161:18	database 112:9
186:10 262:8	136:13 137:7	<b>cyfd</b> 10:10	<b>date</b> 125:3
263:1,8,15	146:7,10 160:3	d	171:24
265:16 283:18	160:7 183:16	<b>d</b> 4:1 30:14,19	daughter
critical 145:11	186:23 196:7	70:2 123:9	244:22
169:19 170:3	197:5 201:23	239:17 241:10	day 5:8 92:12
172:25 206:18	205:12 211:1	254:7	130:7 143:22
225:13 249:6	218:4 220:21	dakota 194:1,7	143:24 144:2
278:2 284:10	228:2 240:14	194:9 202:20	165:21 172:15
284:10 286:18	242:2 260:8	damaged	173:12 183:24
critique 172:8	266:9 271:24	221:17	184:24 185:8
172:9	272:8 276:2	dan 4:16	186:10 187:6
<b>cross</b> 4:8,8,9,9	currently 42:11	172:22 175:1	194:3,5 214:13
4:10,13,13,14	80:20 82:22	175:20	214:14 225:18
4:17 60:18	85:12 86:17		228:18,21
61:2,8 78:25	100:12 178:15	dangerous 249:2	232:23,24
109:2 111:8	197:17 215:14		238:20 250:10
114:8 128:6	231:16 244:13	dare 46:20	257:24 263:1,8

# [day - definition]

263:11 264:6	189:2,12	decline 42:2	105:8 107:2
264:16 283:18	192:13 203:16	213:15 214:2	222:11
285:12,16	209:22 214:17	214:10 229:22	<b>definite</b> 165:8
days 19:22 20:2	dealt 178:22	235:18	definitely 60:9
31:19,19,23,23	debt 244:23	<b>declines</b> 12:23	75:17 124:13
41:12 42:16	decades 172:23	declining	127:8 139:5
47:17,18 48:6	178:23 233:6	144:12	145:6 150:5
48:9,13 83:12	260:14 269:5,5	decrease 11:6,8	162:7
83:19 86:14	269:5	168:20	definition
91:16 99:25	<b>decide</b> 26:5	<b>deemed</b> 225:25	18:15,22 19:4
121:24 129:3,5	27:9 33:14	deep 93:6,19	19:12 21:12
134:10 150:16	119:23 129:12	194:5	22:1 33:13
150:25 151:3	245:17 278:20	<b>defect</b> 85:8,11	40:22 41:6,12
152:8,9,17	<b>decided</b> 43:16	85:18	41:24 42:5
182:21 183:10	43:22,24	<b>defects</b> 85:13	47:12,15,19
183:11 187:2,2	153:19,20	<b>defer</b> 157:1	48:11 49:4,11
190:20 191:14	<b>decides</b> 58:12	deficiencies	49:21 52:7,8
196:24 214:14	172:16	138:7 159:17	53:6 56:2 59:5
227:18,19	deciding 113:1	<b>define</b> 18:20	61:25 62:5
250:25 261:22	122:7	67:9,10 68:23	64:10 80:21
262:3,8 263:22	decision 27:11	157:6 168:11	103:25 104:5
264:1	27:12 50:8	179:20,23	104:25 105:1,5
deadline	105:22 111:22	181:24 193:18	105:12 121:16
122:14 187:2	113:5 145:4,23	193:19,24	122:17,22,23
deadlocks	146:10 169:17	260:24	123:3 125:15
227:10	187:20 218:4	defined 41:11	125:16 129:23
<b>deal</b> 229:8	251:2	64:9 85:20	130:7,11,12
286:22	decisions 19:20	101:15 105:14	156:21 157:13
dealing 185:23	20:18 118:20	181:6 182:7	160:25 176:25
193:1 198:21	124:1 173:21	184:13 191:21	179:15 180:19
212:2 219:24	<b>deck</b> 17:19	191:25 223:25	181:15 182:1,2
266:25	declared	225:20 265:1	187:7 190:3,9
<b>deals</b> 28:12	267:19	<b>defines</b> 219:19	190:14,15,18
29:11 34:6	declares 267:9	defining 19:2	191:19 192:1
184:17 186:17		32:7 42:20	192:10,12

# [definition - devastated]

193:22 194:20	deletion 72:9	depended 33:8	designed
195:1 196:22	deletions 62:23	115:9 254:21	222:18
198:18,19	deliver 244:11	depending 31:7	desperately
199:11 213:12	244:13	64:3 125:21	11:7
213:16 214:2,9	delivered 125:3	137:19	detail 34:22
214:18,21,22	<b>delta</b> 93:11	depends 82:19	35:2 55:12,16
214:23 215:2,6	demands	82:21 231:22	127:6 190:6
219:8,17,20	240:10	257:21 268:17	201:12 213:5
223:21,23	demographic	depleted	214:1 258:13
224:2,6,13,25	54:17	253:15	details 35:1
225:8,10,17,23	demonstrate	<b>dept</b> 2:10	99:10,14 157:3
227:17 236:10	38:13 119:7	<b>depth</b> 107:25	205:15 237:1
260:21 261:1,5	142:19 143:12	108:4 178:8	237:20
261:6,8,10	145:9,15 162:4	194:4 196:12	deterioration
263:23 264:18	162:7 226:24	281:9	252:17
264:21 269:11	demonstrated	<b>depths</b> 187:24	determination
283:3	38:16 215:25	<b>deputy</b> 168:20	49:25 50:6
definitional	216:16 278:14	262:2	95:3 183:4
189:22 223:18	280:9	describe 104:2	186:11,12
225:1	demonstrates	136:17 257:14	187:9
definitions	145:14	described	determinations
18:13 52:21,23	demonstrating	87:21 88:23	207:17 226:15
155:20 177:7	147:14 189:3	117:7 156:11	determinative
190:11 194:2	demonstration	describing	224:10
264:19	71:25 183:15	88:11 262:20	determine
<b>defy</b> 130:7	189:8,17	description	47:25 49:18
degree 10:5	269:11	48:17 123:9	75:3 91:10
244:1 264:3	demonstrative	262:8 263:15	94:8 185:9
<b>delay</b> 123:19	238:6	descriptor	determined
124:11 204:13	denver 14:21	106:8,18	196:12 215:22
delayed 212:24	<b>deny</b> 109:13	<b>deserve</b> 249:11	219:14
delays 184:8	211:13 219:14	249:12	deterring
203:15 224:17	<b>depend</b> 187:24	designated	212:17
delete 63:2	254:20	57:10	devastated
			245:11

# [devastating - discretion]

devastating		(1191141 - 97.74	disagree 31:21
199:13	100:23 101:2 104:4 117:2	digital 92:24 diligence 81:25	85:2 110:4,6
develop 37:18	118:6 141:17	82:12,13,14,24	123:4 124:18
44:23 230:24	141:20 161:23	83:3	125:14
278:16 282:6	161:24 163:1	<b>dip</b> 164:18	disappointed
284:11	171:14 176:2	<b>dipped</b> 42:11	10:20
developed	176:11 184:14	direct 4:7,12,17	discarding
228:9 230:23	185:13 188:7	4:21 15:11,24	222:15
developing	194:2,7,13	16:14 78:13	disclosure 29:5
142:1	200:11,12	136:8 146:14	50:16 210:18
development	203:4,5 208:17	175:3,15	210:25 211:16
13:4 14:1	211:9,15	176:20,23	218:3
22:18 39:16	221:15 223:9	177:22 188:9	discourage
84:7 170:23	228:1,22	190:8 203:10	185:3 203:21
178:13 181:11	229:16,17,17	213:5 217:21	252:23 253:11
184:14 185:4	229:24 230:21	218:10 225:19	discouraging
225:4 279:22	230:22 231:7	238:3,4,7,13	218:1
280:4,12	231:10 235:12	255:24 256:2	discovered
deviations	257:22 269:8	256:16 258:16	232:18
208:5,15	270:2,9,9	258:19,24	discredit 178:5
<b>dialed</b> 253:23	273:20 274:19	262:13,24	discrepancies
dictionary	275:25 278:18	263:25 264:10	219:1
180:19	279:5 281:11	278:4,11 283:7	discretion 26:4
<b>diego</b> 243:19	282:1,1 286:17	283:17	27:8 33:5 35:9
difference	differently	direction	35:12 36:3,12
122:5	30:16 39:17	281:13	37:25 46:17,18
different 29:24	54:3 88:17	directly 34:10	73:4 127:9
29:25 34:1	difficult 91:9	179:5 226:12	131:17 133:19
40:24 48:22	93:14 119:19	234:23	137:16 139:1
52:21 53:17	125:4 126:12	director 27:6	140:20 142:22
54:6,11,12,18	199:22 216:25	27:13 136:15	145:10,13,19
54:20,24 55:21	218:20 220:2	136:25 168:20	146:6 153:9
70:19 94:2,5	difficulty 111:1	208:16 262:2	165:10 178:15
94:20 96:21	dig 236:25	directors	215:21 227:1
97:7,11 100:9		178:24	

## [discuss - doing]

1. 20.0	1. 11	1. 02 < 10	1.0 17 1.0 4
discuss 38:8	dismally	<b>dives</b> 93:6,19	168:17 169:4
79:7 128:15	165:19	divestment	172:16 173:19
133:22 153:2	<b>dismiss</b> 235:23	204:22	183:12 242:19
195:21 207:14	dismissed	division 13:8	division's 19:13
224:12 230:13	234:19	18:18 22:10,14	31:25 35:4
232:4 262:11	disparity 274:3	24:6,8,20,25	47:11,14 93:25
discussed 18:25	disposition	28:4 29:2,7,15	103:9 129:20
31:2 37:2	288:14	32:6 33:11	283:21
45:17 50:15	disproportion	34:1 35:12	divisions 82:5
55:5 123:10	12:13 178:6	36:10,11,15	161:22
126:2,3 127:17	184:24 283:8	37:19 38:1	docket 140:6
127:21,24	<b>dispute</b> 148:17	39:1 45:6,11	dockets 176:1
131:9 132:2	149:18 271:8	46:17,19 47:18	257:15,21,22
201:16	272:3	50:25 54:23	257:23,25
discusses	<b>disputes</b> 204:23	57:10,24 64:3	document
185:16 203:7	disputing	64:5,19 66:15	131:13
discussing	151:12	72:13 74:6	documentation
21:22 67:13	disqualificati	79:13 81:5	183:15 188:24
68:9 94:13	106:15	88:23 92:17	279:12
152:14	disqualify	94:16 109:13	documented
discussion	104:9,10,15,22	114:16,23	184:7
19:13 48:2	disqualifying	115:20 121:11	documents
94:19 105:13	105:20 181:15	126:14 127:3	131:11 203:15
121:20 124:14	disrepair	127:10,11	<b>doe</b> 280:22
125:10 131:22	273:12	130:1,23,24	281:12 282:8
154:12 282:4	disruption	131:1,6,10,16	<b>doi</b> 280:22
discussions	185:5	133:5,9,20	<b>doing</b> 6:20 27:4
20:16 26:18	disruptive	137:17 138:23	36:21 42:1
28:3 45:8,15	178:4	138:25 140:7	46:14 53:25
46:10 51:9,25	distinct 209:1	140:19 142:22	54:4 76:14,22
60:22 162:10	223:25	145:10,12,18	91:13 92:3,4
184:9 205:21	distinction	146:6,9 149:9	130:15 131:2
disease 249:10	101:4	153:9 158:25	150:21 165:11
disgusted	distracted	162:21 163:4	165:17 175:7
252:20	109:1	165:10 168:1	180:24 202:5

# [doing - economic]

	<u>,                                      </u>		
230:18 232:22	dramatically	dropped 37:15	149:16,25
233:17 236:1	221:19	263:22	150:15 180:19
236:16 257:4	<b>drawn</b> 35:18	dropping 49:8	183:24 188:3
281:14	118:18	60:7 235:4	203:18 212:13
dollars 12:20	<b>drew</b> 111:10	<b>drops</b> 59:7	255:19 256:21
55:14 169:23	<b>drill</b> 21:6 23:3	<b>dry</b> 180:22	261:25 262:25
195:19 236:7	23:11 88:6,21	<b>due</b> 81:25	263:11 268:6
249:14	89:5 118:4	82:12,13,13,23	270:24 273:14
don's 230:4	141:5 145:3,5	83:3 185:21	<b>early</b> 46:21
donations	145:7,24 162:3	214:3 225:20	73:12 149:25
244:12,21	242:23 248:10	245:9	204:14 235:2,3
<b>door</b> 39:25	286:22	<b>dug</b> 170:5	244:3
90:20	drilled 182:25	<b>duly</b> 15:10	earned 244:1
<b>double</b> 144:12	194:8 228:15	136:7 175:2	ease 94:18,18
150:24 234:12	228:16 229:17	<b>dump</b> 251:3	easier 41:9
<b>doug</b> 239:11	232:18 266:11	dumping	easily 13:14
<b>douglas</b> 239:17	drilling 13:14	253:14	74:24 220:7
downhole	22:12,15	<b>dunes</b> 151:14	224:21 262:9
42:22 83:16,24	117:22 199:19	duplicative	263:16
90:3,6,13 91:6	240:11,13	181:18	east 2:4
91:8 149:21	246:20 251:14	duration 170:2	eastern 8:4
150:9,13	266:1,9,10	e	easy 212:20
downside	drinking	e 2:1,1 3:1,1 4:1	218:9
117:25	230:23,25	6:9,10 7:20,20	economic 12:12
downsides	240:21	7:20 9:21	13:5 14:1 21:3
118:12,25	<b>drive</b> 1:6 2:10	11:22 23:18,18	23:2 76:5
119:7	12:23 197:3	30:21,22 70:2	102:25 112:24
downtime	198:8 213:2	135:24,24,24	122:10 126:23
185:23	255:2	212:3 239:10	145:4,24
<b>dozens</b> 248:10	driven 224:6	239:18,18	153:16 170:22
<b>dr</b> 1:22 134:12	drivers 13:5	241:10 243:12	178:10,13
164:1	<b>driving</b> 265:23	246:3,4 254:7	179:6 191:22
drafted 35:19	<b>drop</b> 60:8,9	earlier 53:7	192:2 214:25
71:6 125:2	111:22 262:3	99:18 100:2	221:22 251:23
226:17		102:3 140:20	265:22

# [economically - entire]

economically	efforts 45:7	elimination	enforcement
116:23 117:1,8	102:4 217:16	227:19	13:9,10 181:19
178:4 283:12	ehs 208:16	ella 5:21 6:8,23	217:7 222:14
economics	<b>eight</b> 36:1	emerick's	224:22 227:10
37:22 39:24	75:12 76:12	206:13	enforcing
45:1 84:8	143:15 144:17	emissions	284:5
112:1 139:15	144:19 147:23	12:22 282:14	engage 82:23
237:17	148:3,5 164:16	emnrd.nm.gov	engagement
economies	164:21,25	2:12,13	45:6
245:10	184:10 233:6	<b>empire</b> 275:19	engaging
economy 245:1	either 22:23	employed	205:21
<b>edf</b> 282:9	30:22 57:10	15:16,17	engine 186:2
<b>edit</b> 74:11	64:1,5 80:4	136:12 288:12	engineer 15:23
<b>edits</b> 74:6	97:4 103:17	employees	136:21,23,24
educated 168:3	139:11 143:6	244:10	176:6,8 180:6
education 8:9	144:10 152:8	emptied 245:6	180:6,7 257:3
8:11 10:11,20	174:4 177:3	enables 208:25	257:8
11:7 13:3,24	179:4 186:24	enacted 101:20	engineering 8:5
15:22	250:6 260:5	encompass	76:4 126:23
educational	269:14 271:22	110:2 224:17	136:20 257:13
136:18 244:20	285:9	encourage 55:9	enhanced
<b>effect</b> 59:7,11	<b>elect</b> 193:24	55:10 213:22	132:20 139:3
63:13 112:1	electrical 8:15	219:4 222:7	140:22 141:3,6
170:20 223:24	eligibility	250:5 270:18	141:9,25 142:2
effective	104:10,15	ended 8:19	146:2 150:3,7
115:12 172:12	140:11,16	9:13	161:23 222:16
effectively	eligible 67:15	energy 2:10	enjoyed 243:23
57:15,25	139:2 140:21	13:4 167:6,8	244:17
119:16 120:6	269:16 272:18	167:12,17	<b>ensure</b> 26:12
179:9 198:14	eliminate	234:21,22	164:8 178:11
216:14 226:14	138:20 140:13	236:17 237:7	246:24
effects 21:4	216:14	258:21 268:23	<b>enters</b> 65:13
204:7	eliminating	enforce 217:1	entire 98:4
<b>effort</b> 116:13	201:11	enforceable	119:22 184:11
116:16 281:16		178:12	244:25 286:2

## [entirely - examined]

entirely 244:12	eor 34:21 37:11	200:23 234:19	254:23
entirety 244.12 entirety 170:14	46:5,16,19,20	260:12 265:1	everyone's
243:2	47:1 92:3	273:24	43:22
entities 53:18	140:21 141:5	estate 244:14	evidence 19:15
	148:11 164:20	estate 244.14 estimated	
54:11,15,18 55:24 59:14	165:1,2,4,6,17	242:3 272:2	19:15,24 31:22 31:24 130:18
103:15 209:4	179:12 220:16	274:15	137:24 173:23
212:22	270:5 285:21	estimates	
	eors 44:24	271:23 272:3	258:23,24 <b>exact</b> 283:14
entity 53:22,25			
54:3,4,25	<b>epa</b> 176:10,10 184:4 230:22	estimating 187:22	exactly 32:12
55:17,20 56:9			91:24 99:6
56:11,17,23	267:22 280:22	<b>et</b> 137:25 176:4	130:22 132:5
102:19 170:24	epa's 122:17,22		156:18,24
240:11,12	123:3	europe 251:20	160:19,19
enumerated	equal 197:12	evaluate 37:12	162:25 163:3
278:24	equated 224:3	37:17 120:9	165:12 267:1
environment	equipment	evaluates	273:11 281:15
7:14 164:9	181:9 184:12	118:24	examination
167:16 171:2	273:25	evaluating	4:7,8,8,9,9,10
228:8 231:24	equivalent	119:6 286:15	4:10,11,12,13
254:24	47:17 98:3	evaluation 44:8	4:13,14,14,15
environmental	149:14 151:10	226:20	4:15,17,17
2:3 13:18,23	190:21	evening 166:18	15:11 61:2,8
38:21 61:12	especially 57:1	event 5:15	78:25 109:2
136:23 147:5	88:5,25 132:20	78:18 85:11	111:8 114:8
185:13 220:5	162:16 167:7	92:21 106:21	116:6 121:7
247:1 251:24	197:25 237:16	146:17 154:25	136:8 147:1
255:20	249:4 251:7	182:8 214:6,12	149:5 155:12
environment	253:7	238:10 275:1	158:10 159:14
14:3	esq 1:24	events 187:10	163:13 175:3
<b>eog</b> 3:8,13	essential	245:14 252:15	238:8 255:17
245:6	181:11	everhart 3:6	287:7
eogresources	essentially	167:5	examine 96:10
3:15	30:15 177:15	everybody	examined
	195:25 196:2	60:21 134:22	206:15

# [examiner - experimental]

examiner 109:1	exception 76:2	exemptions	expanded
155:11	76:11 277:7	35:7	198:10,15
examining	exceptional	exhausted	203:17 227:16
95:11 107:8	277:4	45:24 285:6	expansion
135:13	exceptions	exhibit 4:20	223:23
example 34:21	126:2 132:1	16:7,8 70:18	expansive
37:11 41:6	162:16 202:10	70:19,20 78:8	205:7
43:15,20 81:12	242:23 274:11	78:16 137:1	<b>expect</b> 150:25
89:11,13 96:15	274:12	146:13,18,19	expectation
97:3 113:16	<b>excess</b> 149:12	exhibits 4:19	18:18
118:3 148:11	155:1	4:20 78:11,15	expected 57:23
160:4,24	excessive	78:19,21	241:24 267:20
161:16,20	188:23 207:7	146:15 227:15	expended
188:2 215:20	exchange 229:5	238:7	101:7 120:9
229:20 232:8	excited 172:3	<b>exist</b> 23:1	expenditure
234:9 265:6	exclude 58:7	124:19 142:14	102:11 145:7
270:6 283:7	71:7	261:11 266:14	expense 89:7
examples 40:11	excluded 69:23	266:16	expenses 9:9
44:17 88:24	excludes 69:20	existing 12:17	expensive
97:11 100:9,12	70:4	21:7 63:8	221:8
100:17 101:9	excluding 50:1	64:24 65:2,12	experience
112:7 118:15	exclusion	73:21 108:14	10:10 15:23
139:10 141:10	181:25	137:9 138:7	16:2 22:17
143:14 161:17	exclusively	142:17 159:17	83:2,23 88:1
179:3 202:13	59:3	159:18 177:5	92:16 107:12
202:14 235:25	excuse 135:4	188:10 198:13	161:19 172:23
266:20 269:7	141:14 154:14	205:17,18	178:2 191:20
273:11 285:5	166:14 267:12	209:9 220:17	206:19,21
exceed 67:7	executive	221:16 242:1	225:9 273:17
72:11 131:25	212:16 218:2	278:23	experienced
132:11	exemplar	<b>exists</b> 173:9	204:4,7 278:19
exceeding	111:14	179:2	experiences
263:3	exemption	expand 74:4	98:19 264:2
<b>except</b> 126:7	182:24	160:14 168:12	experimental
		196:20	269:1

# [experimenting - fails]

experimenting	explain 16:16	expressed	extreme 201:24
113:7	19:10 22:12	266:2	extremely
<b>expert</b> 21:11	23:19 25:14	expressly 25:4	122:24 201:24
147:8 173:3	38:15 39:11	64:22 69:19	extremes
176:1,10	48:23 52:17	<b>extend</b> 73:17	277:11
182:11 198:6	60:4 96:5	74:11 137:17	<b>exxon</b> 228:24
200:20,20	98:11 116:21	138:23 188:1	<b>eye</b> 278:19
201:12 210:23	117:6,20,21,23	264:3	f
210:24 227:23	117:25 118:22	extended 72:10	
227:25 229:4	119:15 133:2	131:25 132:8	<b>f</b> 6:9 23:18 70:2
229:15 257:14	139:25 181:22	181:4 263:3,12	250:18,18 <b>fa</b> 65:25 66:4
258:6,12	189:13 192:21	extending	95:25 101:24
269:22 280:22	201:17 210:16	184:2	104:11,21
<b>expert's</b> 234:16	217:9,23 286:7	extension 35:23	104.11,21
expertise 257:1	explained	64:7 74:15,17	face 248:22
259:24	205:13	74:22 132:16	faced 227:7
experts 172:5	explains 18:17	140:2,4	facilities 79:21
175:24 205:15	39:5	extensions	79:24 80:4
234:6 250:12	explanation	34:15 36:15	212:6
expiration	139:25 152:15	138:12 139:22	facility 80:6
73:13 224:25	explicit 130:24	154:5 188:25	82:15 83:4
expired 61:20	explicitly 66:22	extensive	<b>fact</b> 18:7,11
62:1,1,9,10,18	68:15 70:11	176:15	80:25 153:15
63:6,7,14,25	77:3 127:24	extensively	207:1 233:21
64:8,12 67:22	exploration	204:19 258:16	256:18
67:25 68:2,10	224:3	extent 87:1	<b>factor</b> 181:15
68:11,13,21,24	exploring	101:13 116:21	factors 75:20
155:20,21	153:2	extra 44:5	115:17 139:14
156:14,22	exponential	122:6,12 124:5	178:8 185:22
157:6 190:4,4	236:14	124:5	220:23
197:10 224:12	exponentially	extraction	<b>failing</b> 226:21
224:13	197:1 198:5	242:25	237:21
expiring	199:8	extraordinary	<b>fails</b> 206:20
285:13	express 254:14	277:7	216:4

# [failures - financial]

failures 281:5	<b>far</b> 13:15 16:23	<b>feels</b> 169:2	<b>final</b> 25:12
281:10	27:25 41:8	<b>feet</b> 194:4	51:13,14 52:1
fair 60:6	109:22 169:20	<b>felicia</b> 1:18 5:4	52:2,2 58:2
114:17 151:13	205:7 231:12	fellow 246:15	128:22 210:15
155:6 171:15	233:3,21	<b>felt</b> 11:1 26:4	217:21 228:5
186:16	258:17 275:24	131:6	288:14
<b>fairness</b> 240:10	farming 203:22	<b>female</b> 243:13	<b>finally</b> 13:11
faith 208:20	fast 185:1	245:20	138:2 173:18
fall 55:25 56:12	202:13	<b>fence</b> 102:24	249:16 253:16
56:12 80:20	<b>faster</b> 221:4	fenoglio 5:21	<b>finance</b> 170:10
85:19 92:13	<b>favor</b> 7:13	5:22 6:2,4,8,9	218:16,25
100:13 101:14	279:19 280:1	6:17,19,23,24	248:12 258:23
130:8 225:12	favorite 96:19	<b>fewer</b> 13:3	financial 5:6
227:3	<b>fe</b> 1:7 2:4,11,22	<b>field</b> 22:22	12:23 16:18,21
<b>fallen</b> 97:3,9	3:14 10:17,24	39:16 98:16	24:23 25:6,18
232:19	february 41:24	141:21 181:11	55:14 58:1
<b>falling</b> 100:10	<b>fed</b> 42:21	184:11,13	59:23,24 61:19
<b>falls</b> 100:3	federal 26:24	218:23 220:13	62:17 63:15
243:25	27:17,20 52:8	259:24 279:21	65:18 66:11,16
familiar 15:19	89:11 97:13	280:3,12	67:8,14,23,25
69:2 75:6,17	128:14 151:15	<b>fields</b> 242:11	68:13 69:16,18
75:19 76:9	173:10 176:3	242:11	69:20,21,23
86:3 98:21	210:21 211:12	<b>fifth</b> 113:14	70:1,9,24 77:5
109:10 122:17	228:9 240:17	216:18	94:2,22 101:20
144:5 147:7,11	241:21 248:19	figures 242:6	104:16 108:5
151:11,12,14	272:17,19,21	<b>file</b> 84:23 91:7	123:13 168:13
154:20,24,25	274:8 282:8	91:8 176:20	168:16 173:5,8
165:3 256:13	federally 232:9	<b>filed</b> 15:19	177:9,11 178:7
258:8	feedback 172:1	16:10 171:18	183:14 190:16
families 245:16	172:25	171:22 255:24	192:13,16,17
family 8:6	<b>feel</b> 16:22 19:14	256:16,17	193:10 195:4
243:22 244:15	19:17 34:19	<b>files</b> 92:20 93:6	195:22 196:2,4
254:21 278:1	96:11 126:14	<b>filings</b> 92:18	196:7,16,18
<b>famous</b> 154:13	134:15 167:24	223:5	197:6,12,16,17
	168:19 191:14		197:19 198:3

# [financial - forcing]

			,
198:22 199:1	<b>firm</b> 161:12	<b>fits</b> 94:8 201:15	<b>flips</b> 228:21
199:21 200:15	167:4 230:17	205:24 206:22	<b>flood</b> 141:13,18
200:17,25	256:10	215:12 229:21	141:19,24
201:3,4,16	<b>first</b> 5:11 6:6	<b>five</b> 34:15,17	142:7
202:16 203:11	9:20 11:20,21	34:24 35:8,20	flooding 47:2
205:11,12,17	15:3,10 16:24	35:22 46:4	220:16
206:10,15	17:24 21:14	57:5 71:25	<b>floods</b> 188:6
207:16 213:17	24:16 25:17	73:5,5 75:9	<b>floor</b> 1:5
214:19 215:8	61:14 64:14	89:2 102:8	<b>flow</b> 63:24
215:20,22	66:10 67:5	132:14 133:15	75:16 191:23
216:12 217:12	73:3 79:9	137:15 152:16	203:20 220:8
219:12 220:21	84:16 88:10	152:17 154:10	221:22
221:23 222:5	99:25 111:12	178:16 184:2,3	<b>fnr</b> 42:21 89:11
227:3 238:22	112:5 125:6	214:14 240:16	<b>focus</b> 39:8
240:4,9 244:9	126:5 132:14	248:18 263:12	52:13 72:8
247:9 249:2	133:3 135:22	263:21 284:14	114:18 138:18
268:5 273:6	136:7 138:13	<b>fix</b> 84:2 85:13	167:7 170:4
274:24 275:4	166:23 172:22	89:2	176:16
275:10 276:3	174:14 175:2	<b>fixed</b> 150:12	focusing 264:5
278:23 279:8	194:8 213:12	217:5	<b>folks</b> 5:19 6:1
282:21	228:15 230:15	flaring 115:11	169:11
financials	236:1 239:2,12	208:6,21 227:5	<b>follow</b> 10:14
107:22 108:1	239:15,16	<b>flat</b> 144:11	73:23 83:14
<b>find</b> 11:17	240:6 241:7,9	216:2,3	159:23
125:4 206:16	243:10 246:1	flatten 42:3	following 51:20
237:11 268:12	247:20 250:15	<b>flawed</b> 226:14	<b>follows</b> 15:10
270:14 283:13	254:4,5 266:11	flexibility 33:4	136:7 175:2
<b>finding</b> 96:23	268:24	121:12,16	<b>foot</b> 101:23
<b>findings</b> 169:16	firsthand	132:19 160:9	<b>footing</b> 169:3
237:23	242:12	162:12,21	<b>force</b> 225:2
<b>fine</b> 30:17,18	<b>fiscal</b> 83:12	163:4 183:25	forced 21:6
153:7 165:14	98:4 103:16	192:1 213:19	44:18,19 57:9
<b>finished</b> 240:13	149:14 151:10	215:18 219:10	276:25
<b>fires</b> 188:6	<b>fit</b> 86:17 112:18	222:9 223:6	<b>forcing</b> 284:19

# [fore - further]

<b>fore</b> 170:9	281:6 282:2,9	fracks 44:6	139:1 140:20
171:5	282:18 288:8	fraction 248:11	fuller 34:22
forecast 183:15	forthcoming	265:3	fully 61:22
	206:14	fracturing	fun 43:15 45:14
foreclosing 223:14	<b>forward</b> 36:23	235:2,4	<b>function</b> 221:2
	68:22 168:4	frame 187:6	225:1
foregoing			
288:9 <b>foremost</b> 172:5	169:7,15 173:7	frames 266:8	functions
	173:22,23 193:11 214:7	framework	181:10 185:11
forest 231:23		13:7 14:2	<b>fund</b> 13:23
forever 69:10	214:12 229:20	137:7 173:9	167:14 195:15
179:1,11 186:3	fossil 251:16,18	186:23 206:18	205:16 221:20
234:3 286:11	<b>found</b> 7:12	206:20 226:16	222:17 268:2
<b>forget</b> 46:12	43:18 100:11	278:22 282:21	272:9,23
106:13	248:12	<b>framing</b> 223:24	fundamental
forks 194:6,10	<b>founder</b> 257:3	<b>francis</b> 1:6 2:10	240:10
<b>form</b> 73:21	<b>founders</b> 10:16	frank 6:10	<b>funded</b> 232:10
85:8	four 5:19 36:14	frankly 204:24	<b>funding</b> 13:3
formal 223:4	100:8 133:3	fraud 229:5	124:3 285:20
former 269:22	233:4 244:19	frequently	<b>funds</b> 12:21
<b>forming</b> 259:10	<b>fourth</b> 216:8	140:22	240:17 241:21
259:18	288:18	friends 245:3	248:19
<b>forth</b> 33:22	<b>fox</b> 2:5,5 61:5	<b>froggy</b> 17:11	furnished
62:16 76:1	146:23 255:14	<b>front</b> 16:2 18:4	199:20
169:6 180:14	<b>frac</b> 233:18,19	18:4 35:14	further 23:14
181:17 183:2	233:20 235:5,9	149:20 169:9	23:17 25:8
183:25 184:12	235:10 236:2	176:4 177:23	31:4,5 32:14
186:20 189:19	fracked 43:17	191:10 219:4	38:2 41:18
197:10 199:25	235:8 236:7	255:13 271:9	61:1 77:11
200:13 203:16	251:3	<b>froze</b> 143:17	96:2 116:2
206:5 211:20	fracking 231:6	<b>fuel</b> 181:8	117:2,18
225:14 229:5	234:20 235:6	<b>fuels</b> 251:17,18	120:20 134:2
229:18 234:10	235:13,20,24	<b>fulfill</b> 219:15	134:13 159:5
237:16 268:3	235:24 236:4	<b>full</b> 21:22 22:18	188:1 287:3
268:13 269:24	237:8,9 251:15	22:21 39:16	288:7,12
270:21 271:21	251:25	41:4 133:20	

## [future - glad]

	I	I	I
<b>future</b> 22:21	99:3,4 103:1	93:4,20 108:3	getting 87:7
46:20 72:1	107:14 108:5	111:13 115:24	90:21 92:23
75:10 119:24	111:16 128:14	124:17 125:15	101:6 171:25
183:16 188:22	144:2 167:10	130:23 131:3	209:7 273:9
218:21 219:10	167:13 172:24	139:19 161:5	<b>giant</b> 119:20
220:2,11 225:4	173:22 178:13	167:14 176:24	120:6 252:24
231:8 236:12	178:24 180:1	195:15 196:9	<b>give</b> 10:15
241:25 242:4	180:17 185:23	206:2 221:9	17:22 18:3
245:17 248:23	185:24 186:6	228:4 237:18	19:7 29:14
252:17 253:10	190:19 193:9	259:24 260:1,3	31:11 34:7,10
271:24 278:3	200:6 207:25	261:10 262:18	36:15 40:21,23
284:11,21	208:17 236:15	266:13	40:24 44:7
285:1	236:21 237:13	generalities	45:4,7 65:3
<b>fy</b> 195:13	240:4,9,12,18	237:1	68:20 77:24
<b>fy24</b> 97:25	241:15 242:9	generalized	132:21 134:19
g	242:19,24	236:23	135:17 137:6
g 2:22 6:10	243:2 244:10	generally 17:16	137:12 141:10
9:21 25:14	244:16,22,24	44:25 80:16	143:5 160:8
135:24 239:17	245:8,18	81:6 88:1	161:2 163:3
241:10	246:19 247:7	89:22 110:7	209:23 230:8
gains 232:25	248:9 249:13	258:12 260:17	235:25 245:14
gallegos 288:3	251:2,13	264:20 267:14	286:19
288:17	252:21 254:15	274:10	given 26:22,23
gap 115:21	254:20,21	generate 217:3	45:1 47:11,14
272:22 273:5	258:8,10	generous	51:16,17 57:20
gaps 111:20	260:14 269:23	244:21 245:13	83:19 131:4
gary 9:17,21	275:5 276:15	geological	154:10 244:18
10:3	277:16 279:5	130:18 281:2	<b>gives</b> 24:15
gas 3:3 7:6 8:10	286:3	geologist 176:9	121:15
8:13,21,23 9:2	gate 47:13,14	geophysical	<b>giving</b> 48:3
11:5,9 12:15	gathering	130:18 286:14	175:21 213:5
27:18 54:7	223:8	286:25	<b>glad</b> 61:17
79:20 82:14	<b>ged</b> 11:1	geothermal	170:10 184:16
	general 17:22	268:23	262:16
83:3 91:16,22	44:9 83:14		
98:2,13,20			

# [global - gosh]

	212 27 210 7	440.04.440.4.4	27112712
global 26:24	213:25 218:7	112:24 113:1,1	274:4 275:18
<b>go</b> 7:24 9:25	229:6 230:3	113:18,18,22	275:19,21
11:1 12:1,21	233:11,18	121:22 125:12	280:16,17
15:8 16:23	237:5 253:1,10	128:2 129:11	282:15 283:14
18:11 20:10,13	258:15 260:5	129:14 133:10	284:18
20:25 21:13	262:12 267:16	134:9,18,20	<b>good</b> 5:3 8:14
24:6 26:17	<b>goal</b> 28:23	141:7,19 143:1	10:1 11:18
30:11 32:19,25	<b>god</b> 242:4	144:1 145:5	12:2 13:21
33:1 34:19	goes 122:7	147:6 151:17	14:14,15 15:13
40:1,3 41:8,9	124:9 143:21	151:20 154:13	18:23 23:16
41:21 43:22	179:15 211:15	155:18 156:13	32:5 60:23
44:2 64:3	279:14 280:15	166:22 169:23	61:10 65:11
70:23 72:7,17	281:13	169:25 171:7	79:2,3,5 96:11
78:5,9 85:25	<b>going</b> 14:18	172:2,8,9,10,17	100:17 109:5
89:1,16 90:22	17:18,19,24	172:22,24	109:16 111:10
97:18 111:4	18:6 20:11	174:7 175:15	114:10,11
113:22 120:2	27:3 34:9	179:3 184:24	122:25 134:7
122:3,20	36:23 37:7,21	184:25 185:3,5	135:11 137:17
123:25 124:1	46:11 47:7	186:3 187:24	147:3 153:10
127:13,14,25	48:12 51:18	198:6 200:4,6	153:11 155:14
128:11 129:1	53:24 54:6	200:8,19,20,21	163:5,15,17
131:20 136:4	56:5 64:2,6	203:12,14,19	166:18 167:2
137:6,14	65:5 66:7 69:5	203:24,25	175:5,7 177:25
138:10 139:6	71:16 75:23	205:1,19 217:2	182:14 183:25
140:10 141:23	76:19 80:11	220:9 221:7,7	208:20 230:7
143:16 144:11	83:7 84:17,24	223:16 227:21	241:15 245:3
148:2 153:1	88:11,25 89:4	229:19 231:21	248:3 254:2
160:21 161:2	89:15,16,17	231:21 233:20	255:22 266:22
161:10,13	90:19 92:1,3	233:21,22	282:10
163:18 175:14	95:9 96:9,18	235:17,18,19	goodness 55:20
176:12,18	96:25 97:1,12	236:24 237:11	66:20
177:24 179:18	97:18 98:15	247:21 251:11	goodnight
189:14 190:6	99:6 100:6,12	254:17 259:2	287:7
200:23 205:14	103:11,22	261:9 262:12	<b>gosh</b> 142:3
206:9 208:1	105:13 112:5	262:14 270:4	

### [gotten - harnesses]

gotten 19:5	greatly 205:8	131:11,13	<b>hands</b> 33:14
281:18	green 62:24	guidelines 8:17	happen 21:5
governing	71:17,20	guy 228:19	46:24 89:4
71:13 240:3	138:17 143:25	258:14	90:5 184:15
government	gregory 1:21	guys 20:8,13	200:10 208:7
12:4 170:24	grew 243:19	127:19 172:3	230:25 231:8
282:8	<b>grid</b> 252:5	<b>gwpc</b> 282:9	246:12 266:7
governments	<b>ground</b> 95:12	h	266:24 268:1
14:1	175:23 253:14	<b>h</b> 7:20 239:18	282:11
governor's	grounded	243:12 246:4	happened
251:2	191:21 214:24	250:18	81:13 85:16,21
<b>grace</b> 209:21	<b>grounds</b> 196:21	half 144:19	92:6 100:1
graduated 10:4	198:19	174:5 228:18	281:19
244:23	groundwater	274:15,15,16	happening
grande 248:6	240:20 249:3	hall 1:5 4:13	37:24 221:2
granted 34:15	279:1	149:2,3,6,8	253:8
141:1	<b>group</b> 102:18	152:24,25	happens 13:16
<b>grants</b> 272:17	<b>groups</b> 232:10	155:6	39:25 41:16
272:19,21	grueling	halliburton	51:17 89:3
<b>graph</b> 139:9	115:12	236:3,5,8	<b>happy</b> 10:2
143:20 144:15	guarantees	<b>halo</b> 107:5	hard 60:22
147:11,14	113:21	118:18	120:5 124:10
158:13 159:2	guess 21:24	hammer 96:9	202:12 226:14
164:17	25:17 29:24	hammered	251:25
graphics 259:7	32:25 38:22	115:16	harm 12:13
great 66:14	43:18 110:7	<b>hand</b> 11:15,16	13:21 18:22
95:18 153:7	119:15 152:3	229:9 253:25	32:5 38:21
161:16,20	156:6,9 282:7	handful 230:3	142:19 247:12
162:1 204:3	guessing 76:16	handle 64:12	harming 249:4
245:15 256:5	76:17 83:13	119:24 131:6	harmonize
257:7 260:2	guesswork 76:6	246:23	224:9
282:13	113:15,17	handled 88:17	harms 249:7
greater 66:12	<b>guidance</b> 33:25	146:7	harness 107:4
67:11	36:14 37:5	handling 14:22	harnesses
	58:3 94:16	68:17	106:2

### [harroun - high]

	I	I	I
harroun 41:10	168:17,22	158:5,6 159:7	174:12 221:11
41:18 84:17	170:7 171:7	163:9,12	238:19 252:21
<b>hart</b> 2:21	190:24 196:24	166:11,13,19	<b>hello</b> 6:2 9:19
<b>hate</b> 207:4	229:2 256:21	166:21 167:3	110:23 247:19
233:10	263:10	169:7 174:2,10	254:3 255:19
hazard 32:8	hearing 1:1,18	174:13,18,21	<b>help</b> 57:25 59:4
242:14	5:3,4,5,8 6:3,5	174:23 230:2,6	112:6 121:17
hazards 247:1	6:12,18,22	238:2,9,16,20	141:2 167:13
<b>he'll</b> 14:22	7:15,21,24	238:21 239:19	170:16 171:1
headquarters	9:15,19,22,25	239:22,23	172:10 173:20
245:5	11:10,19,23	241:4,11,14	200:2 249:24
health 164:9	12:1 14:6,14	243:5,16	256:8 280:19
242:13 247:9	15:2 18:21	245:25 246:5,8	<b>helped</b> 209:5
249:4,6 251:8	20:17 51:7	247:16,19,23	228:10 278:16
252:11,13	57:9 60:25	248:1 250:14	280:25
<b>healthy</b> 282:14	61:3 72:5	250:19,22	helpful 30:12
<b>hear</b> 6:4 11:18	75:12 77:13,19	253:19 254:3	45:22 93:17
37:15 40:6	77:25 78:3,6	255:5,15	103:23 123:20
47:10,21 49:16	78:17,22 84:10	257:22 284:13	163:20 207:21
52:5 98:6	99:5,15,17,21	284:15 287:4	helping 14:20
110:22 143:17	108:20,25	288:4	161:8 173:7
143:18 171:7	110:13,23	hearings 79:3	233:16 244:11
172:3,22	111:2,7 114:4	heat 251:21	270:1
174:17 262:1,1	116:3 120:21	<b>heated</b> 45:14	<b>helps</b> 268:2
262:5,6 263:18	120:22 134:4	<b>heating</b> 251:20	hesitant 191:9
270:24	134:16 135:2,8	heats 252:6	<b>hey</b> 76:17
<b>heard</b> 1:17	135:12,14,17	heavily 139:3	<b>hi</b> 109:5 134:7
19:13 21:2	135:21,25	heels 250:25	135:11 149:7
22:19 31:20	136:3 140:1	251:6	<b>high</b> 10:17,25
32:3 45:5 49:1	142:5 146:16	heightened	12:11 16:1
50:20 57:8	146:22 149:1,3	77:4 198:11	29:12 37:7
58:18 98:18	152:24 153:5	203:11 215:8	38:17 39:11
109:24 114:15	154:17 155:5,8	<b>held</b> 27:10,15	170:5,6 177:25
114:18 149:15	155:11 157:17	34:14 39:6	189:15 201:24
154:22 162:18	157:23 158:2,3	66:17 78:2	205:6 213:11

## [high - idea]

	1=2 2 2 4 4 2 4	T	
218:20 220:2	178:8 215:24	hollandhart.c	house 231:23
227:16 273:1	221:1 222:10	2:23,24	252:6
273:10 276:22	235:22 237:14	hollywood 10:3	housekeeping
277:5	237:18 251:14	home 17:12	78:7
higher 9:10	253:14 278:13	<b>hone</b> 115:5	<b>houston</b> 136:13
37:3 65:13,25	280:8	<b>honed</b> 130:14	hovey 245:21
66:4 203:16	<b>hit</b> 59:16	honest 236:25	245:21,23,23
204:12 276:17	276:20	<b>honing</b> 49:10	246:3,4,7,9,10
277:2	<b>hittle</b> 7:18,19	<b>honor</b> 110:21	247:16 249:21
highlight 71:17	7:20,23,25,25	157:21 167:9	<b>huff</b> 220:17
226:8	9:16	<b>hope</b> 16:21	<b>huge</b> 42:3
highlighted	<b>hmm</b> 42:8,15	35:7,7 79:3	193:9 206:23
62:23 63:3	58:5 73:11	92:24 103:24	242:15
65:16 66:9	84:18 87:10	173:13 228:25	hunches 76:6
67:5 71:20	89:19 104:7	<b>hopeful</b> 253:10	hundred 42:16
74:10 127:14	116:19 132:17	hopefully 59:8	52:24 59:21
128:12	<b>hobbs</b> 139:10	60:22 170:17	111:18 127:1
highlights	141:11 142:4	206:12	133:24 176:2
138:17	144:5 150:1	horizontal 47:5	hundreds
<b>highly</b> 236:22	159:2 161:21	88:18 202:3,4	248:10
277:16	164:20	202:6 207:2	<b>hurdles</b> 139:16
hinder 9:7	hockey 42:2	232:16,22	hydraulic
hinkle 2:15	<b>hold</b> 7:10 39:6	233:2 235:7	235:2,3
hinklelawfir	44:15,21 53:4	236:2,5	hypothetical
2:17,18	73:2 123:21	horizontally	80:14 81:11
hire 10:22	222:1 229:25	233:20,21	105:8
<b>hired</b> 10:9	245:25 250:14	horizontals	hypothetically
historic 231:11	250:14 283:14	233:9,25	80:23
historical	284:2 285:12	<b>host</b> 83:20 84:7	i
212:21	285:23	90:22	idea 51:19
historically	holding 44:14	<b>hotter</b> 252:1,1	143:10 148:20
181:4,7	285:18	<b>hour</b> 134:22	180:14 260:4
<b>history</b> 26:14	<b>hole</b> 180:22	135:3,5 174:3	266:13 278:17
79:25 89:25	holland 2:21	228:21	283:25
90:12 93:20			203.23

## [identified - inclining]

	I	I	
identified	107:1 117:7,22	48:9,10 60:4	156:19 157:12
33:25 147:16	120:19 125:1	101:4 167:22	160:18 196:20
214:9 265:15	128:2 170:20	169:24 170:11	196:21 197:6,9
identifies 138:3	178:6 184:18	172:13 193:4	197:17,19
271:2	184:25 185:17	215:19 243:4	198:3,10,18,23
identify 68:12	185:19 192:18	284:20	199:5,7 215:10
idle 279:2	199:13 283:9	importantly	217:14 220:4
280:24 281:17	impacted	186:9	220:11 222:17
<b>ignore</b> 218:23	170:25 210:8	importing	226:5,15,18
ignored 220:24	impactful	224:9	227:17 229:13
221:20 222:11	49:10	<b>impose</b> 24:22	260:4 271:4
223:10	impacts 96:6	<b>imposes</b> 188:23	281:17 283:10
<b>ignores</b> 185:10	102:14,16	impossible	285:22
ignoring 51:16	116:23 184:20	212:15	inactivity 75:13
51:21 184:18	194:19 203:7	impractical	148:5 223:4
184:21	203:11 204:5	140:3 178:3	228:3,3
illegible 65:9	205:7 207:4	208:15	inadequate
illustrate	212:10	improve 40:12	220:22
120:18	implement	77:8 100:25	inadvertently
imaginal	121:16	101:2	213:1
121:18	implementati	improved	inapplicable
imagine 34:23	118:1	13:10 77:8	231:13
46:20 81:7	implemented	232:13	inartfully
82:1,3 199:23	204:10	improvement	101:7
286:12	implicated	221:17	incentive
immediate	192:12	inactive 12:11	213:23 217:9
271:10	implications	16:22 19:12	incentives
immensely	195:7	25:23 32:2,7	232:11
246:20	implicit 57:14	49:21,25 61:20	incentivize
impact 20:2	implying 93:22	62:11,17 66:5	20:18
22:14 48:18,21	importance	75:8 106:7	incident 220:6
48:22 49:8	44:11	129:23 130:4,8	incidental
52:18,22,24	important 7:10	140:17,24	224:20
53:17 55:16	8:7 39:21,21	148:6 155:22	inclining 43:7
81:14 106:4	42:20 47:24	156:2,10,16,18	

## [include - information]

include 50:5	incomparated	102:19 105:7	172:17 173:16
	incorporated 15:17 97:16	242:20 259:3	173:22 180:17
57:8 58:20,24			
109:18 116:24	increase 11:8	independently	180:24 184:22
180:4 183:14	12:10 16:21	259:6	186:7 195:14
243:24 259:6	58:17 86:25	index 25:15	201:22 204:18
278:18 281:4,8	87:19 92:20	200:22	208:7 217:6
included 15:23	116:10 125:21	india 251:21	221:3,6 227:22
30:23 50:9	151:1 164:22	indicate 153:15	227:24 231:4
110:2 128:19	190:15 195:22	indicated 5:20	232:10 236:19
159:1 259:4,21	197:1 198:5	102:5	237:7 242:9,15
271:18	199:9 200:23	indirectly	244:16 245:1,8
includes 13:8	204:17 247:5	179:5	245:13,18
261:19	247:13 271:17	individual	251:13 252:14
including 17:3	278:23	12:19 129:14	252:21 254:21
52:19 73:15	increased	177:8 201:16	254:22 263:16
76:2 176:4,7	86:23 87:3,3,8	215:12,14	267:4 280:17
180:12 193:10	87:8,9 93:10	227:20	284:3
234:10 249:9	168:16 177:8	individually	industry's
257:8 258:21	182:4 204:23	199:2	168:22
279:4	231:15	industrial 8:5	infeasible
inclusion	increases	242:13	236:6
109:25 181:14	189:10 196:5	industries 9:7	inflationary
199:8	196:15 198:22	industry 8:10	70:5 71:6
inclusive 52:9	221:24 222:8	8:13,13,22,24	influence 13:17
52:14 57:21	279:10	9:1,7 13:13	<b>inform</b> 170:16
110:8,9	increasing	14:1 19:19	172:10 173:1
income 13:2	125:21	52:19 57:24	173:20 205:23
245:12	increment	81:6 83:4	information
<b>incomes</b> 246:15	51:18	102:18,22	33:15,18,25
incomplete	incremental	103:1 107:13	34:2 36:14
92:20 200:17	185:3 205:8	111:16 112:16	37:4 76:5
200:25 201:3	increments	128:3 167:13	91:10,12 93:11
incorporate	34:16 73:6	169:2,25 170:6	93:12,13 94:1
192:1 206:17	independent	170:17 171:8	94:10 108:15
	2:14 12:15	171:11,16,24	126:24 146:8

### [information - issued]

170:12,15	insignificant	72:18 95:19	introductory
183:16 258:22	195:18	106:3 115:16	178:1
269:13 270:16		125:19 126:18	inundated
	insolvency 204:18	128:10	279:11
270:19,20 <b>informed</b>		intention	
169:16 171:25	inspection 13:8 instance 29:6	126:25	<b>inventory</b> 139:6 140:23
infrastructure	33:19 56:16	intentionally	
13:24 139:18	91:13 201:10	263:2	investigation 108:7
142:10,11	217:14 232:14	intentioned	investing 12:22
167:12 184:8	257:24 273:2	168:1	investing 12.22
184:11 185:11	274:13 276:18		
185:22 186:8	instances 93:4	interconnected 226:7	13:13,17,21 218:2
inherent	institutions	interest 28:19	investor 212:16
	167:18,19	210:13 211:2	investors
194:20	<u> </u>		
inherently	instruments	247:4 288:14	285:20
40:17	203:13	interesting	invite 7:13
initial 24:15	insurance	43:18 280:14	involved 76:18
26:21 35:19	247:6,13	internal 187:22	115:10 139:3
75:9 79:10,11	274:25	198:1 203:18	142:5 155:5
141:15 189:1	integrity 24:8	217:4	171:8,11
initially 232:17	38:13,17 138:3	internet 268:12	273:23
injection	141:1 142:18	interpretation	involves 260:2
139:11,17	142:20 145:14	9:14 169:13	iogcc 264:21
144:10 180:3	159:18 189:4	interpretations	282:8
182:23 198:16	189:12 224:18	169:8	ipanm 111:11
220:12 226:22	281:10	interruption	124:21 210:22
231:7 268:25	intend 242:22	41:20	issue 25:9 38:6
269:2	<b>intended</b> 33:23	intervention	131:13 168:8
innovation	51:13 77:24	244:4	178:22 181:2
218:23 220:14	209:2 221:3	introduces	181:17 192:16
input 171:22	intent 20:15	181:15 216:24	210:4 217:18
insertion 84:6	22:3 24:24	introducing	218:18 255:1
insight 10:11	27:1 45:22	181:18	284:7
181:20	50:16,21 51:4	introduction	issued 173:4
	51:8,15 60:11	22:16	266:10

### [issues - know]

	I	I	
issues 40:5	<b>job</b> 120:16	k	104:17 105:16
83:16,24 84:3	236:5 267:23	<b>k</b> 2:11 9:21	115:21 117:24
120:1 150:10	<b>jobs</b> 13:3 171:3	135:24 239:18	118:24 119:1,5
150:13,14	235:9 245:12	244:4	126:8 138:17
153:21 160:3	<b>join</b> 239:12	keep 5:14 8:24	138:17 151:6
164:10 168:18	250:6 255:12	9:5 19:18 59:3	153:1,25
169:18 172:5	<b>joined</b> 167:5	63:23 80:11	160:13 174:3
172:24 173:11	<b>joining</b> 14:19	121:24 122:4	175:23 176:16
173:12 176:24	<b>jointly</b> 210:23	127:15 129:5	177:18 194:11
188:3 192:6	<b>jordan</b> 3:15,15	129:22 150:20	203:2 213:25
201:9 207:12	<b>juan</b> 194:14	201:19 239:6	230:15 237:3
208:21 218:8	<b>julia</b> 243:7,11	253:2 285:13	251:4 252:22
220:20 224:21	<b>julie</b> 243:18	<b>keeping</b> 27:1	253:6 270:2
issuing 173:5	<b>jumped</b> 175:10	30:18 88:16	273:25 279:3
it'll 18:12 42:2	<b>jumping</b> 67:22	167:16 183:25	280:15
42:3,3 156:17	68:6 87:7	199:11	<b>know</b> 8:16
198:7	jurisdiction	<b>kelley</b> 14:18	26:14 32:6,19
j	212:24	36:8 135:23	34:8 36:8 41:4
<b>j</b> 2:17 6:9	jurisdictions	136:6,12	43:5 44:3,18
239:18 243:11	193:19,23	kelli 288:3,17	55:13 57:13
jacks 273:25	202:15,18	kelly 4:12	60:4 76:16
jacob 3:6 167:5	204:5	kept 166:7	77:19 80:7
january 41:24	justification	kessler 3:15,15	81:6,18 82:1
123:12	38:12 129:4	key 107:16	82:25 86:21
jeez 54:2	130:20	237:10	87:24 90:5,7
jennifer 3:11	justifications	kick 59:25	90:18 91:13,25
3:11	21:19 30:3	124:23	93:10 95:6,7
<b>jesse</b> 2:11	31:12 32:18	kids 165:24	96:1 97:8 98:9
108:19	34:12 35:3	kind 18:5 40:4	98:14,14 99:12
jessek.tremaine	177:19	59:11 76:8	99:14 103:17
2:12	justify 112:1	80:3,14,25	107:5,10,10,22
jeverhart 3:7	130:15 188:22	81:24 82:7	110:4 111:6
joan 5:21 6:8	269:14,15	88:2,22 92:21	117:14,21
6:23	<b>justin</b> 39:1	95:11 101:24	123:22,24
0.23		102:23 104:3	124:9 125:6,18
		102.23 107.3	

## [know - language]

125:20 126:19	202:23,25,25	254:25 261:4	250:17 254:6,6
129:18 130:6	203:2,12	261:25 262:21	labeling 44:14
130:19 133:4	204:10,10,11	265:6,21,23,24	<b>labels</b> 224:10
135:1 144:15	204:22 205:13	266:22 269:19	lack 219:11,13
149:24,25	205:14 206:2,4	269:19,24,25	236:23
150:2,12,21,23	206:13,16	270:3,3,4,11	lag 42:25 43:2
153:7,13,21	207:8,19 208:2	271:22 272:8	43:8 111:22
154:22 156:1	208:8,13 210:4	273:7,17 274:2	<b>land</b> 18:21 51:8
156:12,16,18	210:6,12	274:5,17	60:22 109:7,11
156:19 157:3	211:12,13,19	275:17,18,18	123:4 155:16
160:4 161:12	211:20 212:6	275:20 276:12	164:5 240:1
161:13,15,15	212:24,25	276:13,25	242:19 246:12
161:19 162:6	214:3,13,14	277:2,8,12,20	247:10 274:9,9
162:20 164:5	217:19 218:6,6	278:1,16	<b>landing</b> 105:17
165:1,15,19,22	220:13,16	281:16,25	landowner
166:2,3 167:11	221:14,18	282:5,9,23	230:18 274:14
169:21,22	222:11 223:7	knowing	landowners
170:19 172:7	223:10,13,15	152:20 162:20	165:23
175:8,8 178:14	225:9,9 226:11	knowledge	<b>lands</b> 109:7
180:16 181:8	226:13 227:24	80:2 85:22	155:16
182:8,18,21,24	228:11,13	102:18 107:25	landscape
183:9,9,15,25	230:4,16,22	108:4 149:17	242:8,15
184:2,8,9	231:1,2,6,12,20	154:11 176:14	language 21:14
185:11 188:4,5	231:20 232:9	<b>known</b> 165:1	26:21 32:10
188:21 189:20	232:11,12	218:5 234:4	33:23 36:20
189:21 193:14	233:5,20,22	knows 242:4	46:7,11,14
193:16,25	234:10,11,12	<b>kyle</b> 2:6 255:20	50:24 51:1,10
194:4,8,9	234:12 235:4	l	52:2 57:24
195:9,9,17,18	235:21,23	<b>l</b> 3:11 6:9,9,10	58:14 63:1,8
196:9 197:9	236:8,13	7:20,20 11:22	65:16 69:19
199:17,18	237:11 246:13	11:22 135:24	70:4,6,11
200:20 201:19	250:8 251:7,11	135:24 239:17	71:21 73:10,20
201:21,22	251:16,23	239:18 241:10	74:1,12,21,23
202:1,11,13,19	252:2,22	241:10 243:11	96:13 115:18
202:20,21,22	253:13,16	243:12 246:3	123:7 126:2

## [language - likely]

	1	I	1
128:18 133:1	laws 128:14	leaving 87:20	189:15 200:23
182:10 198:14	210:21	204:15 249:19	205:6,10
262:22 283:15	<b>lawyer</b> 18:25	<b>led</b> 204:11,22	213:11 223:15
<b>lap</b> 175:10	58:10 67:10	237:13	227:16 244:5
<b>lapses</b> 224:7	81:9,12 96:3	<b>leery</b> 33:6	263:15
<b>large</b> 65:10	110:5 257:19	<b>left</b> 27:8 81:10	levels 89:21
83:5 88:21	lawyers 55:9	118:21 127:10	215:23 226:22
167:11 203:24	128:21,23	133:19 138:15	leverage 209:1
231:25 236:4	lay 220:24	143:23 218:12	<b>lfc</b> 49:13 191:6
242:21 254:19	<b>lead</b> 113:5	248:16 249:12	219:1,6,19
255:3 267:2	171:17 175:20	<b>legal</b> 21:10	221:5 225:16
283:9	175:25 283:19	45:14 81:8	225:24 270:24
largely 44:22	<b>leader</b> 167:17	96:1 110:5	271:1,9,12,18
107:17	leading 76:8	123:7 128:5	271:23 272:25
larger 65:9	126:9 224:21	169:8,12	275:12,14,15
69:13 211:6	249:7	187:10 203:14	275:16 277:8
largest 245:5	leak 249:3	210:24 258:7	liabilities
251:13,17	learned 168:4	288:17	281:23
larralde 241:7	169:20 171:24	legislative	liability 81:1
241:9,10,13,15	252:12	170:10 218:15	81:11,20
241:16 243:6	<b>lease</b> 39:7	218:24 248:12	109:15,18
lasso 117:11	44:16 181:8	258:22	110:1 271:24
lassoing 44:12	221:16 225:14	<b>length</b> 139:1	272:24
<b>late</b> 166:8	284:21,25	lengths 144:8	<b>lied</b> 107:11
211:24	285:7,12,13,16	lengthy 174:7	<b>life</b> 20:2 82:6
<b>latest</b> 136:24	285:18,24	lens 39:15 55:8	129:25 173:5
launch 282:12	286:2,7,16	164:5,5	193:14 230:1
law 2:3 27:18	leasehold 185:4	<b>lesson</b> 119:15	254:22 266:3
48:23 61:12	185:12 191:22	<b>letting</b> 273:24	<b>lift</b> 42:23 186:1
110:3 147:5	<b>leave</b> 7:11	<b>level</b> 8:9 16:1	<b>light</b> 263:14
167:4 169:12	10:23 26:4	29:12 37:3,7	<b>likely</b> 49:10
211:12 255:20	32:1 33:13,13	38:18 39:11	125:23 152:2
lawrence 7:18	135:3 222:25	47:25 55:11	182:2 203:17
7:19,25	242:8 253:4	92:7 93:20	208:20 218:1
		127:21 177:25	271:3 283:19

### [likes - look]

	I	I	I
likes 130:24	linking 227:2	152:22 153:2	long 34:14
<b>limit</b> 34:13,18	<b>list</b> 69:23	156:14 164:14	37:20 41:14
42:12 47:16,17	109:17 219:21	182:12 189:4	93:23 98:11
47:20 57:25	226:6,18	191:16 194:7	127:9 139:14
58:4 72:19,25	241:24 242:5	197:18 198:7	167:24 169:1
128:9 137:18	259:9 260:15	200:18 203:4	170:2 172:18
138:22	263:4 267:6,6	206:13 214:1	253:13 266:20
limitation 36:5	285:6	252:7 277:18	268:23 270:7
37:8 76:12	<b>listed</b> 259:18	<b>live</b> 10:24	279:21 280:3
260:9	<b>listen</b> 129:3	170:18 172:17	280:11 281:25
limitations	147:9 159:24	173:16 246:15	286:17
138:11	256:22	252:4,5,9	<b>longer</b> 32:11
limited 73:5	listened 154:23	257:10	34:24 35:7
76:3,3 109:4	162:25	<b>lived</b> 8:1 173:5	62:13 85:19
109:15,15,18	listening	243:21 245:2	92:13 100:3
109:18 110:1,1	109:21 250:10	livelihood	138:24 139:21
111:16 126:21	250:12,24,25	278:3	143:10 148:10
126:21 155:10	253:9	lives 252:19	153:16 155:24
205:5 218:3	litigation 176:3	living 9:8	157:9 202:3
237:17 246:15	257:15 266:25	243:22 244:17	224:16 285:3
<b>limiting</b> 213:23	<b>little</b> 6:13 20:25	<b>llp</b> 2:15,21	<b>longest</b> 228:12
217:22	27:5 29:24,25	loans 276:25	look 22:18,20
<b>limits</b> 140:15	33:5 35:2 39:6	local 14:1	24:9 39:16,17
143:3 145:10	44:14,21 48:20	244:7,9,18,22	52:20 55:9
146:7 188:25	53:16 56:24	located 10:17	80:10 89:17
lincoln 3:14	58:14 65:9	location 72:15	90:9,17 91:7
<b>line</b> 18:5 49:13	74:20 76:15	143:8	93:11 96:21
81:15 98:25	79:18 92:25	<b>logging</b> 286:14	97:1,14,19,20
116:11 143:25	96:22 99:6,13	286:14,25	123:10,25
144:3 162:22	102:4 104:1	logically 27:12	125:25 156:9
216:1 267:18	122:14 123:10	logistically	156:12 164:17
279:14 283:15	126:12 133:18	140:3	169:15 173:22
<b>lines</b> 161:7	138:14 139:7	logistics 142:8	173:23 180:11
279:13	139:21 141:6	<b>london</b> 14:19	194:1 195:6,8
	149:23 152:4	166:8	195:13,16

### [look - madam]

197:24 202:1	196:23 201:20	153:23 161:6	264:13 265:22
202:12 217:19	251:8 268:18	164:6 168:4	<b>lower</b> 13:16
218:7 221:1	270:9 277:10	170:19 171:7,8	40:1 103:10
228:11,25	280:23	171:24 183:16	190:25 191:1
231:2 233:8,10	looks 42:11	184:13,14	204:1 219:6
233:11,12	82:2 84:11	185:1,13	220:7
235:13 259:12	98:5 119:23	187:17,23	lowering 59:5
262:22 276:18	152:1,5,11	196:24 204:15	191:11
278:19 281:16	270:11,11	204:24 208:6	ltp 56:4
285:25	<b>loop</b> 117:24	209:5 212:14	luckily 65:6
<b>looked</b> 40:12	loophole 76:8	221:18 222:21	252:4
43:7 55:18,25	126:9,15	227:25 228:1	lumping 93:24
56:7 144:4	129:18	229:4 231:22	119:20 206:1
149:24 194:17	loopholes	233:11 234:8	231:11
229:16 268:13	126:13	234:23 254:18	<b>lunch</b> 134:23
271:20 272:11	lose 245:12	266:19 267:23	135:1,5,7
looking 23:18	267:17	267:24 268:12	174:4 244:11
29:19 39:16	<b>loses</b> 13:16	270:20 273:3,8	m
47:4 48:8 49:2	loss 182:4	276:15 277:15	<b>m</b> 5:25 135:24
49:25 50:24	185:4	278:1 280:16	135:24 239:17
55:13,22 70:12	losses 193:9,10	280:17 281:3,7	249:25 250:8
70:14 82:9	<b>lost</b> 13:2 27:22	281:21,24	250:18
86:15 87:1	44:18 145:1	282:10	ma'am 151:5
89:25 90:12,15	164:1 166:5	lots 52:21	151:23
91:15,25 93:3	179:1,11	70:16 122:8,9	<b>madam</b> 6:17
95:7 96:24	193:10 234:3	122:9 176:11	14:14 60:25
97:2,24 98:1	286:11	louisiana	78:6 84:10
99:23,24	<b>lot</b> 8:24 18:3,7	268:24	99:5 108:25
102:14 111:21	20:11 36:9,10	<b>love</b> 89:15	120:20 135:11
123:8 126:13	42:22 45:5	131:10 207:4	149:3 155:10
140:4 152:6	59:19 60:13	low 8:9 12:24	158:1,5 163:11
153:12 156:24	68:7 96:11	101:10 150:1,2	166:21 167:3
161:23 163:19	121:20 122:7	150:2,6 164:12	174:23 230:2
169:7 173:7	123:22 131:22	219:7 220:4	238:2 239:23
175:11 183:13	142:10 145:22	225:17,25	255:15 284:15
			255.15 207.15

### [made - marginal]

<b>made</b> 26:1	35:17 38:9	218:20 220:2	marginal 12:24
27:11 28:15	51:10 55:9	managed 220:5	16:25 17:2,3
36:7 37:13	57:14 60:17,19	management	18:13,24 19:2
49:25 79:14	61:1 63:22	180:13 185:12	21:11,22,25
123:2 133:14	65:8,10 69:13	191:23 225:14	22:8 39:4,5,17
171:16 172:11	74:24 105:23	278:17 279:2	39:19,20 40:9
187:20 230:16	117:13 118:19	280:19 284:21	40:13,21 41:1
251:17 282:7	118:19 122:5	284:23 285:1,8	41:1,6,12,23
<b>mail</b> 239:10	124:1 132:3	manager 112:2	42:4,7 43:6,17
main 245:6	141:25 145:23	managing 48:5	43:18 44:11,13
maintain 33:2	146:10 166:23	199:25 208:18	44:25 45:24
134:19 168:14	167:19 168:25	mandate	47:12,13,15
213:18 215:17	168:25 169:16	165:22 201:7	48:23 49:4,11
217:13 284:3	172:19,19	224:6 283:21	49:19,21 52:7
maintained	173:25 178:10	286:9	52:13,13,25
226:19 232:25	184:4,7 191:11	mandated	54:19,20 56:1
maintaining	191:13 208:15	33:18 37:4	56:13,21 57:17
178:15	216:1 219:11	mandates	57:21 58:1,17
maintains	249:14,18	223:13	58:21,24,25
202:22 267:5	251:24 252:19	mandating	59:3,5,13,15,16
maintenance	254:22 255:1	33:24	59:19,21 60:1
47:2 100:19,22	284:9	mandatory	77:2,5,7 80:21
100:24 101:1	maker 33:6	210:25	81:2,18 83:9
185:12	makes 28:1	manipulate	85:19 86:18
<b>major</b> 208:12	51:4 93:13	141:18	92:13 93:21
273:6	174:9 183:1	manipulated	95:3,6,8,21,23
majority 12:15	240:11	262:9 263:16	95:24 96:5
<b>make</b> 7:6,13	making 9:12	<b>manner</b> 171:3	97:4,9 100:4
8:8,16,18 9:6,9	13:11 23:22	180:2 217:20	100:10,13,18
10:24 12:14	95:10 106:24	282:15	100:18 101:9
19:20 21:11	218:4 280:9	manufacturing	101:15,17
23:6 24:10	<b>man</b> 103:10	8:3	103:25 104:6
25:21,24 26:6	<b>manage</b> 199:24	march 41:25	104:10,14,21
26:16 27:11	199:24 200:7	<b>margin</b> 207:9	105:9,15 106:6
32:24 33:21,23	207:25 208:9		106:14,18

## [marginal - meet]

112:18 116:11	mark 22:3	maturity	278:16
116:15,24	mark 22.3 marked 78:16	215:25 278:13	
ĺ ,			meaning 117:1
117:8 121:21	market 173:15	280:8	132:14 151:3
122:1,17	185:21 227:22	maxed 25:19	meaningful
123:14,17	279:20 280:2	128:8	172:12 183:7
124:16,18	280:10	<b>maximum</b> 36:2	193:6
125:14,19	marketable	143:6 184:3	means 32:12
130:12 168:12	117:17	276:4	40:2 62:10
177:7 178:6	marks 109:23	maxwell	87:3 155:22
186:7 190:15	109:24	110:15,21,22	meant 66:25
190:18,23	marshall 39:13	110:24,25	208:8
191:15,19	mary 239:18	157:19,21	measured
192:6,10,14	<b>massive</b> 249:12	mcf 91:16 98:2	49:20
193:2,2,18,19	272:22 274:3	98:12 99:3,3	measures
193:23 194:20	<b>master</b> 219:21	144:2 152:17	249:17
194:24 195:1,3	<b>master's</b> 10:17	<b>mch</b> 116:5	mechanical
195:11,17,22	matching 201:7	meals 244:7,11	24:8 38:13,17
196:3,19	material 18:3	244:12,13	42:23 83:16
198:22 199:2,4	123:20 212:25	mean 13:2	84:3 119:25
199:7,12	218:4	21:25 38:17	136:20 138:3
204:14,23	materials 259:9	55:4 58:6 60:9	141:1 142:18
213:16,16	259:18	70:11 85:6,8	145:14 149:22
214:18,18,21	<b>math</b> 257:19	87:1 93:7,21	150:10,13,14
214:23 215:3,4	264:8	94:23 100:25	189:3,12
215:7,8,10	<b>matt</b> 2:7	119:16 141:14	223:11 224:18
218:19 219:8	matter 1:9	141:18 147:24	281:5,10
219:11 220:1,4	15:20 78:7	150:2 153:21	mechanically
220:10 222:13	83:14 94:8	154:22 156:4,5	225:3
225:6,8,10,20	108:4 288:13	156:5,12	mechanisms
227:17 229:13	288:15	179:10 180:22	13:9 222:15
269:11 280:24	matters 42:19	186:2,4 188:6	meet 12:8
281:18 283:3	164:19	208:2 210:9	40:22 41:23
283:10	matthias 3:12	233:6 236:15	42:17 49:20
marginally	3:12	252:9 253:16	61:15 79:9
193:5,7,13		267:19 270:6	149:9,10 211:7

### [meet - minutes]

211 17 212 15	. 50.11	017 11 000 14	
211:17 212:15	met 79:11	217:11 228:14	miguel 3:5
255:22	111:12 115:15	229:23 240:2,7	167:4
meeting 79:11	169:25 236:3	240:12,22,25	<b>miles</b> 276:10
79:12	255:19	241:1,20	military 10:4
meetings 79:13	methane 54:22	242:12 243:21	million 8:22
251:1	194:14 249:2	243:24 244:25	52:25 55:14,23
meiklejohn	mexicans	245:9,11	56:17 155:2
239:11,16,17	167:21 242:18	246:11 247:14	228:17 241:21
239:21,23	246:14,15	248:10,21	248:18 271:25
241:5	247:4,15	249:19 251:9	272:12,13,17
member 1:21	248:24 249:11	252:4 253:5,5	272:19
1:22 6:24	252:11	253:11 254:16	millions 12:20
248:7	mexico 1:2,7	257:8,10	<b>mind</b> 40:17
members 1:20	2:4,9,11,16,22	258:22 260:21	68:16 69:9
167:15 168:6	3:5,10,14 7:11	264:12 266:11	88:16 122:18
171:21	7:12 8:1,4,6,24	268:11 272:16	199:11 201:19
memorized	9:9 10:7,14,20	274:20 282:8	mine 245:17
261:3	10:24 11:5	288:4,18	mineral 21:5
memory 49:9	12:4 13:6,12	mexico's 7:3,14	118:5
271:10	13:16 27:2	12:7,15 165:17	minerals 2:10
men 254:18	57:4 102:23	167:13 169:14	minimal 32:24
<b>mention</b> 183:12	103:1 109:17	170:25 177:5	minimum
251:24	110:3 144:5	179:8 188:10	214:8 226:23
mentioned	147:15 148:19	193:9 205:12	minimums
55:13 122:8	150:23 154:21	240:20 251:3	188:4
253:1	165:24 167:10	253:13 258:8	minor 208:4,15
merc 280:22	167:17,24	284:11	208:19 224:17
mere 189:24	168:14 170:22	michael 149:7	<b>minus</b> 267:21
merely 224:15	173:9,25 176:7	microgrids	276:20
mergers 217:4	181:4 193:4,6	236:14	<b>minute</b> 30:15
mess 242:9	194:14 195:1,8	<b>mid</b> 12:14	minutes 5:14
249:20	195:12,15	203:21 211:21	77:24 78:1
message 170:7	197:3 199:12	231:19 232:1	135:4 174:11
messes 7:5	203:1 211:7	midstreamer	239:7 284:14
246:23 247:12	213:2 215:5	99:4	

### [mischaracterization - move]

mischaracteri	modernize 7:2	273:9 276:11	187:21 198:16
281:22	247:5	moneys 11:8	227:19 263:3
mischaracteri	modification	monitoring	<b>moore</b> 4:9,14
219:25	29:19 61:25	180:3 184:14	108:22,23,25
mischaracteri	63:13 72:8	monitors	109:3,6 110:11
218:19	138:16	162:12	110:13 155:9
misclassificat	modifications	montgomery	155:10,13,15
182:3	19:6,8 21:14	4:12 14:18	157:15,17
misclassify	21:15 23:20	34:9,21 36:8	<b>moot</b> 128:10
225:12	26:16 29:8,22	37:15 135:9,13	<b>morgan</b> 61:10
misleading	30:2 31:1,12	135:21,23	69:4 113:11
237:24	32:18,20 34:11	136:6,10,12	147:4
<b>missed</b> 259:16	34:12 37:1	143:2 146:12	morning 5:3
<b>missing</b> 233:23	62:21 63:3	147:3,7 148:25	10:1 11:18
missouri	71:12,17,18	149:7 151:18	12:2 14:14,15
268:22	78:12	153:6 154:18	15:13 79:2
mistaken	modified 17:24	155:14 157:20	109:5 111:10
151:25	48:2 74:24	158:5,12	114:10 134:8
misunderstan	236:8	163:10,15,24	250:4 253:23
96:7	<b>modify</b> 198:17	166:6,14,15	287:6
mitigation	modifying	montgomery's	<b>motions</b> 169:9
242:2	187:2 225:21	14:22 143:2	<b>mouth</b> 112:22
<b>mm</b> 42:8,15	279:1	146:14 152:23	<b>move</b> 14:12
58:5 73:11	molecule	<b>month</b> 19:16	18:6,11 19:3,9
84:18 87:10	236:17	168:21 182:21	19:17 20:22
89:19 104:7	<b>moment</b> 34:15	190:22 211:24	32:10 47:7
116:19 132:17	42:4 60:25	228:2,3 261:21	76:24 78:10,14
mobility	65:3 68:20	264:17	83:8 89:9
212:16 218:2	78:18 109:1	monthly	96:14 99:20
mobilization	146:17 147:6	246:16	103:22 105:19
187:23	159:11 238:10	<b>months</b> 19:12	141:7 143:1
modander 2:12	<b>money</b> 10:24	19:13 43:9	146:13 166:19
<b>modern</b> 178:13	11:6 232:25	122:4,6,13	178:18 179:14
233:20	240:11,17	129:7 156:20	181:1,21
	244:24 255:3	168:21 184:2	182:14 183:2

### [move - needs]

		I	
183:19 185:1	multitude 44:2	58:14 114:20	226:1,2 242:7
185:16 186:17	n n	narrower 52:8	246:21
187:14 188:8	<b>n</b> 2:1 3:1 4:1	219:17,20	necessitates
188:18 190:7	6:9,10 7:20	narrowly 48:22	31:23
191:17 192:9	11:22 135:24	181:6 219:19	<b>need</b> 8:16,17
193:1 195:20	239:18 241:10	nasty 88:24	9:5,6 11:7 12:8
196:4 197:5	246:3 254:6,7	<b>nation</b> 173:7	18:20 22:1
198:9 200:14	254:7	national 167:17	24:22 33:15
203:6 207:11	name 5:4,11	193:7	34:23 44:12,20
207:21 209:13	6:7,9,23 7:16	nationally	48:4 54:2
209:22 210:2	7:19,25 9:20	264:13 268:10	58:13,24 63:24
211:14 212:1	10:2 11:20,21	<b>native</b> 167:20	64:1,19 75:15
213:7 214:6,16	11:22 12:3	natural 2:10	91:25 94:17
218:11 222:23	15:3,14,15	12:7 167:6	128:20 129:7
238:4 245:3	46:13 97:7	179:9 243:23	129:12 185:14
<b>moved</b> 78:8	109:5 111:10	247:10	207:3 209:10
123:17 127:23	135:22,24	nature 45:1	217:18 219:9
193:11 213:4	136:11 147:3	near 223:4,14	223:12 236:15
245:4,6	149:7 155:14	235:6 241:25	236:17 238:16
moves 214:12	167:4 174:14	271:24 272:23	250:15 252:5
<b>moving</b> 31:23		276:11,15	255:1 262:20
38:23 102:2	175:18,20 239:3,15,16,17	<b>nearly</b> 242:18	270:1 271:3
142:13 189:20	, , ,	245:6	284:2
190:17 197:24	241:8,9,10,16	necessarily	needed 44:1
198:21 199:14	243:10,18	99:10 160:17	47:25 121:15
200:24 206:8	245:23 246:2,4	193:14 207:3	224:8 226:10
215:16 222:2	246:10 247:20	208:8 229:14	267:23 269:20
234:14	248:4 250:15	265:24 271:22	274:4
msuazo 3:6	250:18 254:4,5	273:7 281:8	needing 117:13
<b>multi</b> 235:10	254:6	284:6	242:2
265:19	named 93:24	necessary	<b>needle</b> 106:25
multiple	names 5:19	18:15 19:17	107:2 125:1
221:21 229:2	nanasi 110:14	82:18 91:12	<b>needs</b> 131:17
230:19 244:2	157:18	92:18 93:5	137:24 146:9
264:19 269:23	narrow 49:11	101:19 214:23	191:23 242:21
	52:14,16 53:6		

### [needs - non]

			1
252:16 260:5,5	21:6 22:24	205:8,12 206:5	<b>night</b> 287:5
negative 204:7	23:4,11,18	211:7,11,17	<b>nine</b> 242:18
205:7 246:25	27:2 30:23	213:2,16 214:2	nitroglycerin
negotiate 61:16	31:11 39:24	214:21,23	235:5
negotiating	64:9 71:21	215:5,6 217:11	<b>nm</b> 2:10,14 3:3
150:20	73:16,20 74:1	217:24 219:8	<b>nmac</b> 1:10
negotiations	74:13,21 75:1	224:9 226:12	62:13,14,14,15
28:4 171:12	88:6,20 89:5	228:14 229:23	63:9 65:20
neighboring	96:9 102:23	240:2,7,12,20	69:18,22,25
13:12	103:1 109:17	240:22,25	71:1 186:19
neighbors	110:3 112:18	241:1,20	260:2,25
246:13	141:5 144:5	242:12,18	<b>nmoga</b> 4:21
neither 12:11	145:3,7,24	243:21,24	50:13 111:5
107:18 278:21	147:15 148:19	244:25 245:9	124:21 158:1
282:19 288:12	150:23 154:21	245:11 246:11	166:20,22
<b>nerdy</b> 258:13	162:3 165:17	246:14,15	168:6 171:16
net 273:23	165:24 167:10	247:4,14,15	171:19 173:18
neurological	167:13,17,21	248:10,21,24	175:21 198:6
249:10	167:24 168:14	249:11,19	205:15 210:22
<b>never</b> 97:3	169:14 170:22	251:3,9 252:4	238:4,13
147:13 179:13	170:25 173:9	252:11 253:5,5	255:25 282:4
180:7,21	173:25 176:7	253:11,13	282:19,24
nevertheless	176:25 177:5,7	254:16 257:8	nmoga's
59:19 150:24	177:14 179:8	257:10 258:8	167:15 175:22
285:12	179:15 181:4	258:22 260:21	210:23
<b>new</b> 1:2,7 2:4,9	182:6,15 187:6	264:12 266:11	<b>nmsa</b> 66:8
2:11,16,22 3:5	188:10 190:3	268:11 272:16	<b>non</b> 17:3 27:21
3:10,14 6:20	190:14 193:4,6	274:20 282:8	27:22,24 41:1
7:3,11,12,14	193:9 194:14	284:11 286:22	43:18 51:14,20
8:1,4,6,24 9:9	195:1,8,12,15	288:4,18	56:21 58:11,21
10:7,14,20,22	196:19,21	<b>newer</b> 231:11	64:5 106:8,19
10:24 11:5	197:3 198:18	231:12	173:10 208:22
12:4,7,15 13:6	198:19,24	<b>nice</b> 43:19	209:4,6 210:7
13:12,16 16:24	199:1,3,12	149:9,10 253:5	210:7 211:2,25
16:25 20:22	201:8 203:1		212:2,6,25

### [non - ocd]

	1	1	
214:8 224:4,25	83:11 84:17	246:4 250:18	obvious 18:2
244:8 265:22	89:11 96:15	250:18 254:6,7	obviously 45:9
281:10 286:8	97:13 121:6,10	o'clock 250:6	153:23 164:19
noncompliance	121:19 122:3	<b>o'grady</b> 4:8,13	<b>occ</b> 5:6 79:3
50:17,22	122:16 123:8,9	61:5,7,9,10	164:4 196:9
nonproductive	123:11 125:9	66:25 67:1,3	225:16 238:21
12:21 185:10	126:7,7,20,21	77:11,14	282:5
<b>norm</b> 237:22	126:21,22,25	146:23,24	occur 203:8
<b>normal</b> 79:19	126:25 127:13	147:2,4 148:23	257:23
277:10	127:13,14,25	<b>object</b> 104:24	occurred 113:3
normally	128:11,12	105:4 152:21	115:14 147:22
117:17	129:1,16	<b>objecting</b> 74:6	148:3 179:13
<b>norms</b> 217:6	130:17 131:20	objection 66:24	<b>occurs</b> 174:4
<b>north</b> 194:1,7,9	137:19,20	objectionable	<b>ocd</b> 26:5,19
202:20	151:15 159:13	105:7,10	28:24 29:21
northwestern	161:10 177:24	objections	33:5 61:15
242:11	199:23 206:3	78:18 104:23	72:5,22 73:1
<b>note</b> 193:12	206:23 216:2	146:17 238:10	75:2,10,12
199:17 234:17	233:17 263:4	<b>objects</b> 104:20	76:4 79:8
<b>noted</b> 183:24	266:21 276:19	obligation	85:12 90:6,12
195:2 203:18	278:18	22:14 187:10	91:7,9,12,25
212:13 221:14	numbers 52:22	266:2 267:10	92:20 93:3,5
225:15 231:15	103:11 120:17	obligations	93:10 94:7,13
237:9 276:10	195:9 216:1	12:9 182:4	95:22 97:14
<b>notes</b> 226:6	261:3 271:8	186:20 190:16	102:16 103:8
<b>notice</b> 189:7,16	272:6 275:17	204:12 216:12	105:19 106:5
229:2 239:10	numerous	217:13 219:16	107:13,24
<b>noticed</b> 154:16	79:24 161:13	224:5,7	108:4 114:19
notices 27:20	<b>nw</b> 3:4 288:18	observed	121:15 124:14
<b>noting</b> 235:1	nykiel 2:7,7	107:14,17	126:22 128:15
nuclear 253:15	0	<b>obtain</b> 188:23	128:17 131:22
number 10:7	<b>o</b> 6:9,10,10	obtained	132:18 137:12
31:10 41:10,18	11:22 135:24	219:23	156:1,6 159:25
48:6 49:6 54:8	135:24 216:21	<b>obtaining</b> 64:7	160:8 161:2,8
54:9 76:1,15	239:17,18		162:12 173:12

## [ocd - oil]

178:21 180:12	offenses 26:14	135:21,25	70:22 79:9
181:7 185:14	<b>offer</b> 11:12	136:3 146:16	83:6,20 88:4,4
188:23 196:9	14:8,11 171:25	146:22 149:1,3	103:10 110:23
199:24 200:7	172:6 249:23	152:24 153:5	122:18 129:10
201:21 208:25	250:2,13	155:8 157:17	132:5 142:3
211:13 221:4,9	253:22 255:8	157:23 158:2,3	148:1 174:16
224:14,23	267:15 278:11	158:5,6 159:7	282:15
226:10,13	<b>offered</b> 196:12	163:9,12	oil 1:3 2:9 3:3
229:7,15	282:19	166:11,13,19	5:5 7:6 8:10,12
230:13 260:24	offering 257:2	166:22 167:3	8:21,23 9:2
261:15 262:2	258:6	174:2,10,13,18	11:5,8 12:15
265:17 266:21	<b>offers</b> 57:22	174:21,24	13:7 19:12
267:5 269:14	<b>offhand</b> 150:23	211:1 230:2,6	27:17 39:24
270:16,19	<b>office</b> 14:21	238:2,9,16,20	47:17 54:7
271:2 273:11	109:7,11	239:19,22,24	66:15 79:20
273:14 274:21	155:16 164:5	241:4,11,14	82:14 83:3
274:23 275:13	242:19	243:5,16	84:8 86:14
275:22 276:12	<b>officer</b> 1:18 5:3	245:25 246:5,8	87:2,2 89:18
278:16 279:11	5:4 6:3,5,12,18	247:16,19,23	91:16 92:8
280:13,16	6:22 7:15,21	248:1 250:14	98:3 99:25
282:6 284:3	7:24 9:15,19	250:19,22	102:25 107:14
ocd's 33:14	9:22,25 11:10	253:19 254:3	108:5 111:15
103:20 121:13	11:19,23 12:1	255:5,16	128:14 139:4
152:13 170:3	14:6,15 15:2	284:13,16	140:22 141:7
171:10 198:17	27:5 60:25	287:4	141:25 142:2
209:25 219:21	61:3 77:13,19	official 27:7	143:23 144:12
220:20 221:13	77:25 78:3,7	<b>offs</b> 106:13	144:13 146:2
223:22 226:25	78:17,22 84:10	<b>offset</b> 274:1	149:8,13 150:3
276:7 277:9	99:5,17,21	oftentimes	150:7 151:10
286:9	108:20 110:13	286:11	158:24 161:23
october 1:14	110:23 111:2,7	<b>ogrid</b> 54:6,8,12	164:17,21
288:4	114:4 116:3	ogrids 98:7	167:10,13
<b>odd</b> 37:12	120:21,22	151:9	172:24 173:21
offenders 27:2	134:4,16 135:2	<b>oh</b> 20:12 55:20	178:13,24
28:24	135:8,12,14,17	62:7 66:20	180:1,17

### [oil - operation]

		I	I
184:11 186:6	<b>okay</b> 6:21 7:18	154:25 160:20	189:7,16
190:19,19,20	14:10 17:11	174:10 175:12	286:10,19
193:9 194:8	20:13 21:13	189:11,20	ones 40:24
200:6 207:25	23:23 25:1,12	190:7 191:17	88:23 194:16
208:7,17	31:16 41:10	201:14 208:11	201:24
211:23 218:23	42:6,22 48:8	210:9 212:1,9	ongoing 108:7
220:13 228:17	50:11 63:19	216:8,18	203:14 212:21
232:23,24	64:13 65:12	219:24 220:19	<b>online</b> 144:14
233:25 235:15	66:7 68:7,15	222:2 223:17	238:25
235:17,17,19	68:20 69:1	224:11 225:5	<b>onsite</b> 236:9
235:22 236:21	70:16,23 71:5	228:5 246:9	<b>open</b> 6:10 8:19
237:10,13	72:18 73:9,23	256:12,21	9:13,13 47:18
240:4,9,11,18	73:24 75:1	257:1 258:3	47:19 130:6
241:15 242:9	77:21 78:19	260:2 262:6,18	282:5
242:11,11,19	80:23 81:4,16	262:19,22,23	<b>opened</b> 129:22
242:24 243:2	82:13 83:7	263:14 264:5	opening 4:4
244:9,16,18,22	84:9,22 85:1	264:10 265:9	166:23 167:1
244:24 245:8	85:15 86:13,20	271:23 272:16	opens 7:7
245:18 246:19	86:25 87:18,24	274:24 275:22	operate 168:14
247:7 248:9	88:15 89:15,25	276:13 277:12	171:2 173:6
249:13 251:2	90:5,8,10,25	278:4 287:2	211:8 215:4
251:13,25	91:14 92:6,10	oklahoma 10:5	operated 57:9
252:6,14,20	92:15 93:16	13:15 228:16	97:16
254:15,20,21	96:18 97:10	268:22	operates 56:14
258:8,10	98:23 102:2	<b>old</b> 40:25 89:1	274:24
260:14 267:20	103:14 104:13	175:9 231:11	operating 9:10
267:22 268:25	104:19 106:20	231:24 252:2	12:25 26:13
269:1,23	112:20 114:23	266:19 281:24	48:5 53:17,22
272:18 275:5	115:14 123:1	<b>older</b> 88:18,25	54:5,11,15
276:15,20	125:25 128:5	111:21 236:12	93:10 102:22
277:16,20	128:11 132:8	omits 223:24	103:9,15,20
279:5 286:3	133:14 147:11	once 41:21 72:4	167:15 210:5
288:4	148:3,23 151:8	90:21 96:18	operation 82:9
<b>ok</b> 143:19	151:13,20,24	132:15 150:3	99:10,19
	153:8 154:20	179:1 187:20	

## [operational - oral]

	T T		
operational	107:14 109:14	32:11 48:4,14	opinion 52:12
79:25 80:8	112:25 113:6	51:15 52:13	57:13 76:10
88:1 99:8	122:5 123:12	53:9,11 57:2	82:15 83:2
172:20 183:14	123:22 132:12	57:10,15,16,17	106:1 118:24
185:10 191:22	137:19,20,24	60:12 79:20	119:1 145:20
203:10 206:20	140:8 142:24	85:13 92:17	178:2 179:7
211:5 214:25	146:8 155:1	95:2,22 96:6	182:3 194:22
223:5 225:13	165:2 177:14	114:19 123:16	196:25 198:4
operationally	177:15 183:12	123:25 126:13	205:9 214:22
178:3	187:5 189:8,18	126:18 129:18	258:7 259:10
operations	199:7,18,20,23	141:3 143:6	259:19
22:19 29:3	202:5 204:1,22	147:15 148:19	opportunities
40:13 81:14,19	209:23,25	160:5 161:3,17	269:3 270:10
90:17 132:19	210:5,10,12,19	164:3 167:11	opportunity
231:17 245:6	210:20,22	168:13 170:6	10:2 14:9
258:10 277:10	211:11,14,17	170:21,21	60:20 123:16
operative	211:20 212:19	173:6 183:7	161:2 166:18
215:24	222:9 228:23	184:25 185:2	243:3 268:15
operator 24:5	228:23 232:21	185:14 186:7	<b>oppose</b> 16:20
26:10,22 27:9	232:25 233:16	188:22 192:19	21:11 29:4
27:19 28:12,19	233:18 242:20	195:8 201:2	<b>opposed</b> 139:23
29:12,20 44:19	265:11,20	203:21,24,24	202:12 216:2
45:16,19 49:20	266:2 267:9	204:24 207:4,7	265:24 269:25
50:14 53:3,4	269:13,18,24	208:4,14 209:3	opposition
54:9 55:10	270:15,19	211:3,21 215:9	204:18
56:1,13,25	273:19 275:8	216:6 217:13	ops 39:15
58:24 59:16	275:11 276:12	221:11 226:24	optimization
60:1,5,13	277:5,17,20	227:3,8 228:1	42:24 223:15
64:25 65:18,22	278:12 280:7	229:12 240:9	<b>option</b> 201:6
65:24 66:2	285:19	263:2 266:20	216:14 270:12
71:1,24 72:12	operator's 17:1	266:23 267:7	<b>options</b> 73:15
73:14 74:17	49:18 108:5	276:5 278:1,2	182:13 232:4
79:19 80:24,25	operators 12:8	281:25 283:9	271:16
81:3,10,19,23	12:16 20:19	285:25	oral 239:6
81:24 102:24	21:5 26:13		

# [order - oxy]

<b>order</b> 51:17,20	9:15,19,22,25	outcome	overregulation
94:15,16 98:24	11:10,19,23	224:10	245:1 247:2
132:20 138:4	12:1 14:6 15:2	outcomes 13:18	overruns
140:7	61:3 77:13,19	outdated	221:13
orders 50:17	77:25 78:3,17	248:15	oversees 27:13
51:2,13,13,14	78:22 99:17,21	outlined 225:19	overshoot 49:2
51:16	108:20 110:13	outlining 33:10	overstepping
orient 138:13	110:23 111:2,7	outright 216:13	22:2,5
143:20	114:4 116:3	outset 177:17	overview 17:22
original 118:7	120:22 134:4	outside 17:6	19:7 29:14
originally	134:16 135:2,8	99:7,15 152:22	31:11 34:8,11
172:7	135:14,17,21	outweigh 205:8	40:3 44:7 45:5
origination	135:25 136:3	252:15	45:7 137:7
171:10	146:16,22	overall 16:17	175:22
<b>orphan</b> 169:21	149:1 152:24	119:2,7 195:6	<b>owe</b> 164:8
217:15,18	153:5 155:8	201:14 280:18	owl 188:2
218:20 219:17	157:17,23	285:16	own 50:10
219:20,21	158:3,6 159:7	overarching	57:11 211:22
220:1 266:14	163:9 166:11	153:3 178:19	241:17
266:16 267:6	166:13,19	201:15 213:8	owned 8:2
267:13 268:7	174:2,10,13,18	218:14 226:9	<b>owner</b> 118:6
268:14,14,19	174:21 230:6	overbroad	210:6
268:20,25	238:9,16,20	17:15 225:1	owners 21:5
271:13,16,18	239:19,22	overhead	211:1
274:20 279:2	241:4,11,14	203:16 204:1	ownership
281:17	243:5,16	265:20	217:25 218:3
orphaned	245:25 246:5,8	overlooked	owns 228:19
145:17 241:22	247:16,19,23	237:8	<b>oxy</b> 2:20 4:20
271:5 272:18	248:1 250:14	<b>overly</b> 178:3	4:20 14:20
274:6 275:1,9	250:19,22	217:25	15:17,18 16:20
276:16,18	253:19 254:3	overnight	17:23 19:1
277:3	255:5 284:13	184:15	21:15 25:9
<b>orth</b> 1:18 5:3,4	287:4	overreaching	26:22 27:11
6:3,5,12,18,22	ostensibly	56:20 57:1	29:8 32:22
7:15,21,24	169:23		33:12,16 34:8

### [oxy - participating]

35:2,4 39:19 40:12,25 47:3 51:25 52:19,20 53:3,5,14,17,17 54:11 56:4,5 56:25 57:1,2,4 57:7,15,22 59:14,24 60:5 60:13 61:17,24 63:1,5 64:9 68:9 71:11,21 72:8,18 73:25 76:23 78:21 79:7 80:2,10 80:16,18,19,23 81:2,5,7,11,21 82:3 83:10,22 84:19,23 85:3 85:17 86:20,22 87:3,13,24 88:3 90:2,5 91:13 92:1 94:24 95:5,7 95:13 97:16 98:2 99:8 100:17 101:7 101:14,16,23 102:11,13 103:15 104:20 105:21 106:4,9 106:21 111:17 112:6,10,25 116:9,14 119:23 120:9 120:13 121:23	124:13,20 125:3,10 126:18 127:4,5 128:15 133:5 136:11,22 137:1 138:11 139:23 140:1 140:11,13 143:12 146:19 148:8,22 149:12,12,22 150:16 151:8 152:14 153:1 153:17,18 158:14,17 161:5,19 162:22 163:3 164:3,23 165:1 165:18 166:1 179:11 228:24 229:20 270:6 oxy's 16:7,17 19:5,8 20:6 21:19 23:20 25:15 26:9 28:17 29:14,22 31:1,12 32:17 34:11 38:11 39:11 40:6 44:9,10 45:5,8 48:20,24 52:22 54:5 55:13 59:13 62:20,23 63:13 68:1 71:16,18 72:9	72:22 74:11,14 78:8,10,11 79:23 83:15 95:4,24 98:7 102:4 120:16 130:7 138:16 141:4 143:3 148:9,12 153:3 158:20 161:7 161:15  p  p 2:1,1 3:1,1 9:21 243:12,12 246:3 p&a 187:11 198:6 208:6 223:19 p&a'd 186:19 p.m. 11:13 14:9 135:7 174:12 238:19 287:8 p.o. 2:16,21 3:10 pace 236:14 packet 16:7 pad 223:15 page 4:2 97:14 147:17 262:24 279:7,13,15,17 279:24 283:7 283:17 284:18 palace 2:4 pandemic 276:20	papers 235:14 paperwork 279:10 280:13 parameters 125:21 130:13 parcel 171:5 park 9:17,18 9:21,24 10:1,3 parke 9:21 11:10 parse 262:17 part 17:3 18:21 19:1 20:8,16 28:19 32:9 36:22 38:11 39:18,22 44:22 44:24 52:2 58:21,25 82:2 90:23 107:2 108:7,10 115:1 115:1 120:11 122:6 128:6 150:6 159:1 171:5,16 188:24 210:3 231:18 246:14 260:2 261:15 280:15 participate 217:15 participating 258:1
---	---	--	--

### [participation - permission]

participation	170:24 223:15	pennsylvania's	perceptions
203:21	passed 81:9	235:1	32:22
particular 33:9	passion 10:14	people 51:7	perforating
94:9 97:20	<b>past</b> 46:4 134:9	90:17 112:6	286:14
98:10 105:9	141:23 211:1	118:7 129:25	perform 80:3
131:12 141:12	<b>patch</b> 84:24	231:3 234:24	87:13 88:2
142:4,24,24,25	85:4 88:2	236:15,16	102:13 138:4
148:1 150:8	113:23	246:14 252:15	performed 82:6
151:1 153:13	patchwork	252:23 255:2	101:8 102:19
154:24 190:21	212:23	256:10	period 17:5
233:16	<b>patrick</b> 7:16,17	percent 17:1	35:19 75:4
particularly	pattern 80:25	28:18 48:14,15	79:15 97:4
12:24 45:21	97:19,22	49:8,9,19 53:9	98:12 152:18
92:16 186:7	pauline 245:21	53:9,11 56:12	182:21,24
particulars	245:23 246:3	56:22 58:18	184:4 189:1
115:6	246:10	59:4,7,8	190:22 209:21
parties 45:8	<b>pause</b> 78:18	104:14,22	261:21 263:11
168:24 170:1	146:16 238:9	105:2,19,21,25	264:17
218:4 242:24	<b>pay</b> 11:6 56:14	106:1,6,7,12,12	periodic 76:4
288:13	59:20,24	111:18 125:11	126:22
partner 14:21	240:12 246:16	125:13 127:1	periodically
27:6 173:19	<b>paying</b> 248:16	133:24 144:18	73:1
partners 14:2	<b>pc</b> 3:4,9	147:25 148:2	periods 98:1
partnership	<b>pd</b> 183:13	160:5 164:15	148:11 223:3
109:16	<b>peak</b> 235:15,17	195:14 199:4	263:3
partnerships	<b>peaked</b> 235:17	201:22 210:6	permanently
109:18 110:1	237:10	210:13 211:2	72:13 143:7
<b>parts</b> 79:16	pecos 1:5	211:23 215:10	177:4 186:25
224:9	243:24	229:3 240:21	187:16
<b>party</b> 131:1	<b>peltz</b> 52:6	267:3	permian
242:16,20	penalizes 209:3	percentage	136:16 165:17
278:21	<b>penn</b> 276:24	54:19 195:10	202:6 242:10
<b>pass</b> 108:17	pennsylvania	207:9	266:12
140:25,25	228:13	percentages	permission
146:20 155:7		48:24 125:22	5:23 84:12

# [permission - plugging]

135:20	180:6	platform 7:17	162:3 202:4,5
permissions	<b>phase</b> 123:19	11:11 14:7	202:8 221:8
135:18,18	phased 222:7,8	108:24 134:5	223:12 227:9
permit 204:13	phone 253:24	135:15,16	248:16 266:2
266:1	phrase 63:7	249:22 250:2	271:3 274:16
<b>permits</b> 266:9	224:16	253:21 255:7	275:13 276:7
266:10,15	<b>piece</b> 101:2	play 39:21	276:12 286:20
permitted	piled 8:12	223:10	plugged 23:7
268:24	<b>pilot</b> 162:2	pleading 11:4	37:16 57:4,5,7
permitting	<b>pipe</b> 273:18	<b>please</b> 6:7 9:20	75:13 144:25
86:3 97:15	pipeline 150:19	11:20 15:4,13	151:22 152:2
152:13 156:2,4	150:20 185:22	112:21 135:19	153:15,22,23
184:12 187:23	<b>place</b> 36:20	136:10,17	177:4 179:1,12
<b>person</b> 14:17	64:12 71:24	137:6 160:21	186:25 187:17
27:15 173:3	137:12 144:23	160:22 174:15	187:21 206:23
210:5,12 241:6	158:17 168:25	175:14,18	207:3 228:14
perspective	174:3 187:3	177:20 179:19	230:20 231:3,9
14:5 22:19	215:14 235:15	186:23 189:4	232:1 260:5
129:15 168:23	254:23 255:2	189:12 190:1	267:3 273:3
171:19 200:2	275:11	194:24 199:15	274:20,22
207:23 280:18	placed 75:8	204:5 205:3	276:8 281:24
pertaining	placement 75:9	210:16 216:10	286:10
189:3	75:11	217:9,23	pluggers
pertains 258:10	places 45:9	218:13 225:7	231:20
<b>peter</b> 69:3	205:16 233:17	232:7 237:4	<b>plugging</b> 5:6
petition 18:17	<b>plain</b> 114:21	239:8 243:10	8:23 12:9
34:13,17 79:8	<b>plan</b> 72:13 84:7	247:5,11	31:19 57:9
85:20 101:16	126:15 221:3	249:16 254:4	66:10 67:7,14
106:22	<b>planet</b> 251:19	<b>plots</b> 41:10	70:24 77:2
petition's 16:20	<b>plans</b> 165:8	<b>plug</b> 44:18,19	102:4,16
petitioners	184:8,14	57:11,16 72:13	117:14,22
79:7 240:24	plant 8:3	113:6 118:3	120:10 123:13
petroleum 2:14	150:21 185:23	124:2 141:4	124:5 145:22
15:23 149:23	185:24 251:18	143:7 151:21	152:17,18
176:8,9 180:5		153:18 154:10	178:25 179:5

## [plugging - practices]

179:10 182:4	147:25 148:4	49:18 58:18	118:12,15,25
185:6 186:20	178:2 196:11	83:15 105:20	119:6,6 126:1
187:19 190:13	196:14	106:14 193:9	170:20 184:18
195:3 197:12	point 24:4	portfolios	184:20 185:17
201:24 202:2	30:22 39:23	104:15,23	185:19 203:7
203:23 205:22	48:19 67:24	105:25 124:1	206:4,5 212:10
206:21 211:18	70:6 75:2	199:5 283:10	219:10 225:4
215:25 216:5	106:14 117:16	portion 21:18	229:19 236:12
219:15,23	117:17 118:17	25:10,13	237:3 274:3
221:25,25	121:13 126:11	137:18,22	286:1
222:23 223:4	126:13 128:10	140:14 195:17	potentially
223:11,16	132:4 140:9	206:11 265:5	41:6 55:13,25
224:4,7 225:2	165:11 166:4	portions	81:15 85:10
227:4,14	166:20 171:25	138:21 141:20	106:23 117:22
229:15 231:4	235:17	193:8	130:13 179:6
231:14,17,18	<b>pointed</b> 118:14	<b>pose</b> 240:19	280:23 283:10
231:23 232:1,5	152:25	<b>poses</b> 207:5	powell 20:1
232:10 238:21	<b>points</b> 28:25	<b>position</b> 16:17	22:7 48:1
242:22 248:13	126:4 133:3	26:9 28:17	50:13,20 58:13
260:3 265:13	<b>poised</b> 271:13	39:11 44:10	129:10 130:19
266:18 267:10	policy 12:4	153:3 175:22	168:20 262:2
271:2,24	57:14 99:9	220:20	powell's 28:9
272:23 273:1	221:22 249:16	possible 54:14	47:10 49:16
273:10,18,20	274:25	99:3 121:4	57:23 129:3
274:14,15,18	<b>poll</b> 242:17	185:4 213:19	262:7 263:14
275:8,23,24,25	polluting	253:17,18	<b>power</b> 181:9
276:2,9 277:8	252:11	<b>post</b> 26:2,3	practical 12:12
278:14 280:9	pollution	41:24,25 63:15	172:12 211:9
280:23 283:5	246:25 249:7,9	197:2 207:7	212:9 223:24
283:19 284:1	253:11 254:25	<b>posting</b> 240:4,8	practice 13:18
284:20 285:3	<b>poor</b> 20:19	248:11	79:20 82:16,18
<b>plugs</b> 201:22	40:17 171:3	potential 21:3	83:3 218:1
274:7	<b>portend</b> 114:20	22:21,22 91:6	257:14
<b>plus</b> 34:17,24	portfolio 17:2	106:8 107:1	practices
35:8 46:4	40:14 44:10	116:22,22	180:13

## [pre - prior]

<b>pre</b> 43:19	prepared	press 5:24	prevalent
256:16	158:14 162:8,9	11:15 236:16	197:3
precise 209:21	259:6	249:25 253:24	prevent 22:12
predicate 80:18	prescribed	pressure 47:2	22:15 27:1
predict 89:4	82:23	96:12 98:24	28:23 46:23
predictions	<b>present</b> 24:6,7	presume	116:16 119:3,4
237:10	41:4 143:22	159:20	119:8 248:16
<b>prefer</b> 33:12,12	220:11 268:5	presumes	270:17 283:21
262:19	presentation	182:19	286:9
preferably	14:22	presumption	prevention
214:8	presentations	45:20 91:11,20	20:19 177:12
preference 58:7	122:9	94:24 95:13,20	207:15,20
preliminarily	presented	97:5 179:21	209:15 226:5
61:24	19:16,25 31:22	182:15 183:1,5	prevents
preliminary	122:12,12	183:8,21 184:1	116:21 141:3
183:4 186:11	148:9,14,16	184:6 186:11	previous 89:21
premature	169:21,22	213:13 214:11	123:2
117:13,22	236:22	261:16,19,20	previously 27:5
178:25 179:5	presenting	262:4 265:2,12	41:1
179:10 185:6	14:23 37:11	265:17 269:10	<b>price</b> 25:15
190:13 195:3	41:5 169:15	277:22,24	84:8,8 200:22
203:23 221:24	173:22	283:4,19	267:20
221:25 225:2	presently	285:10	pricing 39:24
227:14 283:5	207:21	presumptions	primarily
283:11,19	preservation	177:2 179:17	111:13 167:7
284:1,20	216:9	190:10 226:12	237:17
prematurely	preserve	pretend 133:5	<b>primary</b> 21:2,7
23:7 141:4	213:19 215:21	pretty 83:6	141:12 161:14
162:4	226:25	86:7 117:17	233:13 274:23
premised 143:9	preserving	127:20 129:2	principles 76:2
premium 171:3	33:4 178:14	130:14 138:18	76:11
preparation	president 12:3	150:2 213:5	<b>prior</b> 18:19
38:24	136:14 231:16	253:2 258:15	22:17 31:3
prepare 256:8	257:3	prevalence	41:12 46:10,12
		199:12 215:5	68:4,17,23

## [prior - production]

73:13 82:6	126:6 249:8,9	171:9 173:20	47:17 130:9
88:8 99:15	273:13	183:3 188:25	150:2 165:20
192:14	procedural	235:11 251:22	165:21 193:3,5
pristine 7:12	226:15	261:13 279:6	193:8,13,15
private 10:13	procedurally	processes 74:18	207:25 216:7
232:11 267:3	183:6	279:10 280:13	219:7 220:8
probably 6:20	procedure	processing 99:4	222:12 225:17
22:8 52:9 69:5	182:25	procurement	225:17,25
80:7 83:13,20	procedures	221:13	228:12 232:23
90:14 92:23	113:7	produce 83:19	254:17 264:13
96:2 105:22	proceed 15:1	98:24 99:2	265:7,9,22
110:5 114:11	199:19 230:4	129:22 149:13	276:14,22
118:5,6 121:21	proceeding	150:16 151:9	277:5,14,16
121:21 122:18	109:7,22	165:23	285:4,9,9,15,18
122:19 129:6,7	155:17 158:15	produced	286:3
130:1 133:1	167:22,25	83:11 87:15	production
134:25 145:2	168:2,3,5,18	92:8 98:13	12:23 13:22
208:17 211:20	169:6,11,19	100:1 145:3	40:13 41:14
<b>probe</b> 261:9	170:9 171:13	164:11 180:13	42:25 43:2,4
problem 19:15	171:17 172:7	228:17 234:1	43:19 44:5,17
19:25 31:24	173:14 175:17	244:24 260:14	47:16,20 49:9
32:24 33:8	177:18 190:24	261:22,22	59:8,12 77:9
69:7 90:3,14	230:6,13	producer	86:1,4,5,10,14
90:20 91:6,24	proceedings	251:18	86:16,23,25
122:13 210:8	1:13 4:3 5:2	producers	87:3,20,20
268:8,13,14,16	111:11 139:22	12:14	89:16,21,25
268:19,20	167:7 171:15	produces	90:12,16 91:16
269:4 271:13	287:8 288:8,10	190:19 228:16	91:17 92:7
275:25 276:9	proceeds 182:8	228:18 264:16	96:6,25 97:2
277:21	process 19:24	277:19,23	97:19,20 98:4
problematic	28:20 36:7	producible	98:8,11 99:24
200:3 201:17	64:2,6,12	87:18	101:10 102:15
problems 36:7	68:16 115:4,12	producing	105:6 111:20
42:23 88:21,22	122:7 138:7	12:24 40:1	111:22 113:22
89:6 91:8	146:11 170:2	42:14,15 43:6	116:10,14

### [production - propose]

118:20 136:23	181:6 225:11	project 33:21	properties
139:11 143:24	professional	35:13 37:11	208:10
144:2,10,13	82:15 83:2	92:3 141:25	proportionally
145:8 147:18	107:12 136:18	146:2 150:7,10	207:3
148:10 150:6	136:21 176:6,8	164:20 179:12	proposal 12:9
150:25,25	257:7	185:24 270:5	13:11,20 19:11
151:4 152:2,8	professionals	285:21,21	29:14 30:17
152:9,17	212:17 237:15	projected	40:15 49:14
153:14,23	professor 8:5	184:13	63:21 72:22
154:10 159:2	proffer 95:10	projections	75:7 138:15,21
160:5,15	107:8	191:24	161:6 179:4,20
161:13 164:12	profile 54:17	projects 34:20	182:17 186:18
164:15,18,21	<b>profit</b> 244:8	34:23 46:19,23	190:8,14
167:18 180:3	246:20 249:19	139:4,5,5	196:19 198:12
182:5,19,22	<b>profits</b> 242:24	140:21,22	198:25 201:2
183:16 185:18	program 10:9	141:5,9,22	206:10,16
185:20,21	10:17 37:13,20	142:2,12	209:15,20
186:5 193:7	37:21 39:18,22	148:12 162:2	212:4,11,15
195:16 198:16	41:5 44:22	220:17 232:14	214:21 216:21
211:24 214:8	133:6,10,16	246:24	216:22 219:8
220:12 225:11	176:11 177:6	prolific 257:18	256:13 265:11
226:22,25	188:11 196:3	promising	proposals 9:11
232:12,13,19	205:18 230:24	10:22,25	76:23 170:19
233:1,13	244:8,8,12	promote 185:6	178:1,5 190:12
234:12 237:10	272:18 280:23	190:12	192:11 195:5
251:25 262:3,8	281:2	promotes	195:21 196:6
262:9 263:8,16	programs	227:11	198:2,17
263:22 264:6	13:14 35:6	promulgated	218:22 226:6
276:17 281:9	46:5 136:14	209:3	227:13
285:16,19	232:10 244:21	propane 252:7	propose 57:24
286:8	progress 79:15	<b>proper</b> 100:18	61:24 64:10
productions	132:22	145:16	71:23 72:3
232:22	prohibit 212:5	properly 26:13	104:3 140:13
productive	prohibiting	107:3 145:14	163:3 191:19
101:10 180:2	212:2	186:18	197:15 200:16

## [propose - provisions]

209:25	162:22,22	proposing	269:19,20,25
proposed 1:10	168:7,10 172:1	16:19 20:6	270:7
6:25 16:18	177:1 178:20	31:1 36:18	provided 36:9
17:15,23 19:6	178:20 180:19	132:2 138:20	47:9 69:25
19:6,8 21:15	182:2 183:21	142:16 158:17	70:1 100:16
21:19 23:20	187:1,15	190:25	129:4 130:19
26:10 28:5,18	188:10 190:5	proposition	158:14 205:11
29:7,22 30:1,6	190:18 191:6	261:10	206:24 240:24
31:12 33:17	193:22 194:21	proprietary	258:23 265:16
34:12 35:1,18	196:4,15,22	43:10	265:17 270:21
36:1 37:1	197:8,19	protect 99:13	273:3 278:22
47:12,15 50:4	198:13,19,22	164:9 171:2	<b>providers</b> 7:6
50:25 51:5	199:16,19	179:8 240:7	provides 25:4
52:2,8,12 55:6	200:15 201:1	249:17 283:21	64:23 72:10
57:14 61:16,25	202:16 206:20	protected	73:15 123:16
62:16,20,23	206:25 207:14	24:13	146:8 196:2
63:2,13 68:2	207:17 208:3	protection	217:12 223:23
69:17,19 70:3	208:12 212:3	240:15 279:1	providing
70:17 71:12,16	212:11 214:11	protective	206:12
71:18 72:9	215:2,7 217:24	24:21	<b>provision</b> 17:1
74:1 77:1,4	221:23 223:19	prove 24:8	18:10,17 23:17
78:12,12 80:20	223:23 225:10	76:16 91:21	23:18,24 25:13
86:18,21 97:4	226:11,16	<b>proven</b> 222:20	31:18 33:3,13
100:10 101:21	240:3 241:1,18	provide 40:10	34:16 36:25
102:15 104:5,9	242:5 248:7	65:18 101:19	57:21 58:23
105:21 106:5,9	254:14 260:24	123:12 127:6,8	62:16 69:2,25
109:12 115:22	261:1,5,11,16	128:21 131:1	70:21 71:7
116:25 117:6	265:3 269:9	133:22 137:16	96:5,9 122:15
118:1 126:4,15	270:15,18	139:25 142:17	123:15 124:18
138:11 140:11	283:18 284:19	143:13 158:20	124:23 125:12
140:14 143:3,5	proposes 63:1,5	167:12 172:25	128:12 129:19
144:23 145:20	71:11 72:8	194:17,24	131:4 155:2
148:6,7 155:19	139:21 146:8	201:4 203:25	179:22 183:22
156:22 160:8	219:9	205:2,9 240:15	provisions
160:12 162:17		248:24 269:14	25:10 29:12

## [provisions - questions]

	I	I	_
50:15 61:18	262:16	<b>put</b> 7:5 8:20,22	question 53:10
71:14 124:14	<b>pulling</b> 69:7	8:24 14:20	66:24 80:18
209:23 258:9	<b>pump</b> 228:21	24:16 25:1	83:1 89:9 94:7
258:15 262:12	273:25	35:13 46:11,22	94:9 98:17
proxies 93:4	<b>pumps</b> 184:12	53:13 64:19	101:6 107:11
prudent 56:25	220:8 236:8	72:16 75:13,23	108:2,10
57:16 80:25	punch 18:5	112:22 113:23	109:19 116:20
81:24 82:16	<b>punish</b> 229:12	117:12 120:16	118:10 122:4
92:17 223:14	<b>pure</b> 202:23	132:23 140:6	124:10 126:5
<b>public</b> 1:1 5:9	purging 269:4	164:14 168:25	132:13 147:20
5:10,17 8:9	purpose 18:16	248:20 252:13	153:6 156:25
10:15,20 11:2	84:1,5 91:24	255:2 272:6	159:23 160:23
11:6,12 14:11	125:2 175:16	<b>puts</b> 49:19	161:16 162:24
43:3,11 72:5	175:21 179:21	putting 94:2	163:24 165:12
75:12 109:6	179:24 285:23	130:6 142:6	165:15 259:16
155:15 164:9	purposes 18:13	191:14 262:14	269:18 280:14
167:18 170:1	18:15 19:19	269:12	questioned
221:12 238:17	68:13 70:20	q	50:13
238:23,24,25	105:10 121:15	_	questioning
239:1,8,10	169:18 177:1	quadruple 144:12	111:20
240:17 241:21	179:16 180:4		questions 61:1
242:8 248:16	180:16 182:1,7	qualifications 136:19	61:6 73:7
248:18 249:4	183:10 190:9		76:25 77:11,15
249:23 250:2	209:11 213:13	qualified 212:17	77:17,23 78:23
253:22 281:23	260:20 261:6		87:11 94:5
287:6	261:15 263:8	<b>qualify</b> 89:22	97:10 100:2
published	284:25 285:10		105:16,18
235:15	pursuant 5:12	qualifying 83:9	108:22 109:4
<b>puff</b> 220:17	73:17 239:3	<b>quality</b> 10:11 239:25 249:6	110:12,15,17
<b>pull</b> 17:18 65:4	pursued 219:23		110:19,25
66:7 70:13	<b>purvis</b> 48:13	250:25	111:5 114:7,13
97:12 112:19	49:7 53:8 69:9	quantify 278:8	114:14 116:2,9
147:6 154:13	230:16 231:15	<b>quarter</b> 228:18 265:7	116:11 119:13
163:24 166:22	<b>push</b> 112:10		120:10,20,25
243:7 261:7	-	query 112:18 152:13	128:25 131:19

## [questions - really]

	I	I	I
134:2,6,11,12	railroad 202:22	rather 26:6	<b>real</b> 36:13
134:13,17	rainbow 65:5	33:24 54:25	41:22 216:1
146:25 148:24	rainbows 65:6	93:5,18 110:8	236:23 244:14
149:4,11 155:9	raise 9:8 11:15	227:9 282:12	realistic 14:3
155:10 157:16	253:24	rationale 36:13	realities 178:13
157:19,21	<b>raised</b> 8:6 10:3	138:18,19	192:7 227:22
158:1,4,8,13,23	11:16 25:9	177:19	reality 215:4
158:25 159:6	134:11 283:2	reach 28:1	realizing 77:20
159:10 163:7	283:25 285:2	36:19 45:9	really 17:9
163:10 166:12	raising 59:4	61:18 121:20	19:15 20:15
210:16 224:18	192:17	127:19	33:2,4 35:14
287:3	ran 84:23	reached 177:21	43:15 46:10
<b>quick</b> 36:13	244:7	235:16 238:23	53:10 55:4
41:20,22 45:4	ranch 228:20	reaching 45:12	61:16 74:6
quicker 20:18	range 47:1,3	79:16 205:7	97:25 100:17
127:22	55:23 88:2	reactivated	120:5 122:24
<b>quickly</b> 155:18	90:14 105:6	220:7	122:24,24
189:14 208:24	120:2 147:16	reactivation	124:22 129:7
237:5 285:7	172:23	186:1 223:14	133:22 137:10
<b>quit</b> 10:25	rank 10:21	reactivations	142:21 161:2
<b>quite</b> 55:15	rankin 2:22 4:7	147:22 148:12	162:23 164:18
77:22 79:14	4:10 14:13,14	148:18	165:5,11,16
257:18	15:8,12 42:9	<b>read</b> 20:9 52:5	170:3,4,11,20
<b>quote</b> 88:19	60:24 61:4	62:6 65:16	172:3,25
101:15 262:13	66:24 78:4,6	66:9 67:4	175:21,23
268:7	99:5 113:10	68:18 69:12	176:16,24
<b>quotes</b> 88:19	116:4,5,7	70:8,22 73:3	178:9 180:25
r	120:20 121:4	169:10 170:14	182:18 194:11
<b>r</b> 2:1 3:1 7:20	135:8	198:14 219:4	197:24 204:2
9:21,21 11:22	rankin's	256:19 270:23	205:25 208:13
135:24 241:10	154:13	reading 25:22	217:4 222:11
241:10 247:22	rate 252:11	50:8 114:21	250:12 251:8
254:7	277:3	191:4,4	252:10,12,18
radius 232:15	rates 273:1	<b>ready</b> 6:21	253:10 268:17
233:2,9,24	276:18		281:16,19

### [really - redoing]

282:10	rebuttal 4:21	221:20 222:17	219:6,16
<b>reap</b> 242:24	16:10 38:23,25	232:10 272:9	225:16
reason 83:18	39:8 40:4	272:23	record 5:1
85:2,5 108:12	47:11 48:2	reclassification	15:14 25:16
110:6 121:9	52:5 69:3,8,11	224:20	38:16 58:9
122:12 135:4	75:20 78:15,16	recognize	78:11 80:15
138:18 148:17	84:16 143:2	223:2	135:12,22
149:18 150:16	146:14 183:1	recognized	238:8
153:22,24	218:11 228:5	181:7 264:12	recording
154:9 166:14	238:3,5,14	recommend	103:16
196:10 221:21	255:24 256:2	115:19 182:6	<b>records</b> 217:14
252:10	256:17 258:16	214:20 215:11	218:5
reasonable	258:19 261:19	recommendat	recover 21:6
12:6 76:10	262:13 278:4	109:10 146:4,5	146:1,2
105:23 107:6	279:7,17,24	181:22 214:17	recovery 21:2
154:8 183:6	284:19	215:17 216:8	132:20 139:4
217:20 263:13	recall 22:11	216:18 217:8	140:22 141:3,7
264:14	50:18 54:7	217:21 222:24	141:9,25 142:2
reasons 21:24	116:11,18	222:25 225:6	146:2 150:3,7
28:16 29:17	159:20 191:7	225:24 263:21	161:23 284:22
31:3 39:25	268:8	263:22 280:6	285:1
41:17 44:1,3	received	282:20	recreational
44:23 83:21	272:17	recommendat	244:21
84:7 90:22	recent 40:24	9:5 58:2	<b>red</b> 138:16
104:25 105:3	42:25 86:6,7	183:20 191:18	144:3 161:7
139:2 149:22	97:1 103:15	205:2,4,6	162:22 197:8
150:18 153:3	242:17 251:2	209:14 213:9	redevelopment
225:19 240:23	recently 57:4	213:11 222:3,5	232:16 233:2
240:23 263:4	251:14	279:9	redirect 4:10
285:3	recess 78:2	recommended	4:14 116:4,6
<b>rebut</b> 183:7	135:7 174:12	115:5 219:18	158:7,10
265:11,16	238:19	recommending	165:13
rebuttable	reclamation	216:9	redlands 244:2
265:2 277:25	12:8,17 205:16	recommends	<b>redoing</b> 184:10
	219:16 221:16	218:17,25	

### [reduce - relative]

<b>reduce</b> 125:20	refrac 41:16	registering	regulatory 13:7
203:20 217:14	84:2 100:21	227:5	27:13 32:10
reduced 217:12	113:23	registration	40:21 130:5
reducing 13:21	refracked	26:10 28:12,20	136:15,24
59:12 60:3	41:13	28:22 45:17	139:16 142:9
107:1 125:22	refracs 186:1	50:14 54:7	167:8 178:14
228:1	refracts 111:14	109:14 177:15	181:16 185:11
reduction	112:12	209:25 217:24	192:7 208:5
12:22 217:16	refractures	227:2	213:18 215:17
<b>refer</b> 84:24	284:24	<b>regs</b> 124:9	227:9 228:8
85:3,25 97:12	refresh 75:25	regulated	269:21,23
257:21	<b>refuse</b> 204:25	130:25	<b>reject</b> 181:25
reference 75:18	<b>refute</b> 183:3	regulating 9:1	182:9 183:23
157:12 189:17	<b>refuted</b> 186:12	regulation	213:12,21
209:2,10 224:9	regard 16:23	137:18,23	216:19 223:22
referenced	20:24 153:3	231:5 245:9	226:16 279:18
84:14 96:16	regarding	regulations	279:25
258:20	26:10 28:18	8:12,14,16	rejected 209:18
references	48:11 158:13	11:5 27:18	215:13
157:4 189:8	190:8 208:12	128:14 157:9	rejecting 123:6
208:5,25	217:8 238:21	157:10 168:9	182:6 214:20
209:20 262:18	regardless	170:16 173:16	related 82:14
referred 267:11	100:1 199:7	209:9 214:5	91:8 104:17
267:12	regards 121:18	228:9,10 229:8	177:1 179:16
referring 98:10	132:1	229:9 230:21	182:15 185:11
106:7	regimes 178:7	231:10 240:3	190:10,11
refine 282:6	<b>region</b> 286:16	240:14 245:18	213:13 214:8
refining 128:20	regionally	282:2	226:7 230:15
222:14	13:13	regulator 22:11	288:13
reflect 178:7	register 279:9	32:11 102:23	relates 23:19
206:20 216:5	registered	172:16 269:22	226:8
reflected 181:3	97:16 109:16	270:1	relating 5:6
<b>reform</b> 13:10	136:21 176:6,8	regulators	relations 12:4
<b>reforms</b> 204:11	199:6 257:7	13:25	relative 205:22

## [relatively - requirements]

relatively 79:15	130:22 169:24	219:19 225:16	requests 140:2
233:19 273:1	remembering	264:23 270:24	188:24
released 151:21	267:2	271:1,9,19	require 7:6
releasing 227:6	<b>remind</b> 69:6	275:13,14,15	50:16 65:25
248:17	remotely 14:19	275:16 277:8	66:4,15 75:1
relevant 34:2	removal 17:5,6	288:7	77:2,4 91:10
69:17 146:9	30:6,14 32:3,4	report's 225:24	139:21 188:22
258:9 275:8	177:10 208:13	reported 90:6	200:5 201:2
reliance 219:21	209:18	98:2 160:5,15	203:17 216:15
221:5	remove 32:5	177:21	216:17,21,23
<b>relied</b> 259:10	59:2 63:5,6,14	reporting 98:1	246:21 247:6
259:18	72:19 201:5	213:24 217:22	required 7:8
<b>relies</b> 237:18	removed 214:7	222:16 224:17	25:6 33:14
reluctant 269:8	removes 208:3	reports 211:24	63:15 67:24
<b>rely</b> 252:19	223:5	226:10	82:23 85:17
relying 222:20	renewal 71:11	represent	92:22 183:14
remain 23:9	72:19,23	109:6 111:11	196:13 199:20
24:17 25:4	renewed 72:4	152:12 155:15	211:7 240:13
64:15,23 148:6	renumbering	188:4 193:8	240:15 268:3
178:12 225:3	31:7	255:21	275:4
283:12	repeat 18:8	representative	requirement
remaining	26:14 27:1	148:18	17:4,7 23:25
76:12	28:24 259:16	represented	26:11 29:4
remains 13:4	repeated	143:24 144:3	58:22 72:25
remarks 228:6	203:13	representing	199:6 215:9
remediate	repercussions	167:9	216:4
72:14 143:8	193:10	represents	requirements
221:3,8	replace 106:5	71:17,21	12:10 13:15
remediated	106:13,18	167:11 273:5	28:19 35:11
221:13	122:23 252:3	reputation	55:15 62:17
remediation	<b>report</b> 170:9,12	81:22	168:13 177:9
271:25	170:14 191:7	request 35:5,5	177:13,14
remember 54:7	212:25 218:16	140:4 189:7,16	187:3 188:5
103:11 127:20	218:25 219:2,4	requested 37:3	189:10 195:22
127:23 129:5	219:6,9,13,16	75:2	196:8,16,18,20

### [requirements - revamp]

196:20 197:2,6	285:1	107:21 111:19	restrictive
197:16 198:3,5	reservoirs	129:9 130:21	46:15
198:11,24	233:11	143:3 159:21	result 85:18
199:2,8 200:17	resident 246:11	162:1 230:12	112:12 116:13
201:3 203:11	248:5	responses	145:21 179:5
205:9,13 207:9	residents 240:7	222:25	182:2 190:12
207:15,20	240:22 251:9	responsibilities	193:11 204:8
209:1,16,21	resource 21:2	136:13	223:16 235:20
210:1,19 211:8	22:21 23:10	responsibility	283:4
211:18 212:14	164:4,6,7	164:8 179:8	resulted 235:21
213:17,20,22	resources 2:10	207:24 229:7	resulting
214:19 215:13	3:8,13 12:7	240:6 247:3	214:24
217:25 220:21	21:7 22:24,25	248:21 284:8	results 139:12
221:17 226:5	23:3 37:18	responsible	186:11
227:5,20	44:21 101:8	12:16 13:20	<b>resume</b> 287:6
requires 65:13	102:13 118:2,8	14:3 171:3	retain 35:4
74:13 85:13	120:9 146:1	242:16,20	63:1,8 138:25
189:7,17	164:2 165:19	247:8 254:16	140:19
requiring	167:6 179:9,11	responsibly	retained
12:19 26:7	208:1 240:8	167:16 208:1	215:15
33:11 47:13,16	247:10 284:10	284:12	retaining 35:12
93:5,19 140:1	286:11,12	rest 5:16 76:21	35:15
187:5 212:18	respect 153:8	130:5	retention
240:8	178:21 183:20	restoration	225:14
reserves 21:6	194:24 209:14	13:23 240:1	<b>retired</b> 10:4,13
23:7,8 84:4	223:17 225:6	273:21 274:1	11:2 241:17
117:23 120:1	234:18	restore 72:14	<b>return</b> 72:12
222:20 233:12	respiratory	143:8	89:20 143:6
233:23 234:3	249:8	restored	255:10
reservoir 101:3	respond 95:3	113:22	returned 92:7
120:1 122:10	95:22	restrict 26:25	159:2
185:12 191:23	responding	restricting	returning
225:14 279:21	51:22 279:8	123:3	232:12
280:3,11	response 47:8	restrictions	revamp 40:2
284:21,23	47:22,23 57:23	140:12	

# [revenue - risk]

revenue 13:1	<b>rework</b> 123:16	100:25 101:14	262:21,24
13:23 87:3,8	reworked 77:8	102:3 103:22	263:5,12 264:9
103:6 118:8	141:17	105:1,12,16	264:18,22
182:5 193:11	richard 109:6	106:15,16	266:15,15,18
197:4	155:15	107:5 108:9,9	267:1,14
review 30:1	<b>rid</b> 196:1	108:13 110:11	272:14,15
32:17 34:7	<b>rig</b> 39:24 83:25	110:18 114:1	275:23 276:3
35:5 37:1	84:6	117:10 118:12	276:16 277:15
38:25 40:5	<b>right</b> 6:18,20	118:16 119:11	279:12,12,22
73:1 76:4	16:3 17:10	119:17,21	285:14 287:5
81:25 91:9	18:22 22:17	120:3,14,17,22	<b>rights</b> 24:21
92:22 99:14	23:10,22 24:7	124:17 125:21	102:15 118:6
118:22 126:22	25:17 30:23	128:4 132:7	120:10 185:4
127:5,8 183:11	31:4 34:2	135:2 140:15	283:22
183:13 187:22	35:23 36:2,4	144:1 151:2,22	<b>righty</b> 166:13
203:14	37:6 38:13	153:5 154:6,17	<b>rigid</b> 178:3
reviewed 24:20	42:2,12,18	157:5,25	183:23 194:20
35:1 173:4	43:10,12 45:11	164:20 167:2	199:10 206:17
256:12,16	46:22 47:1	180:22 183:19	213:15 236:10
reviewing 74:7	49:3,4 51:13	185:24 186:2	263:1
84:22 175:9	54:9,10,12,23	191:10 196:11	<b>riley</b> 11:16,17
281:23	55:1,2 56:1	197:5 199:14	11:18,21,22,25
revised 79:8	58:8,9 59:8,17	202:21 207:11	12:2,3 14:6
192:13	59:21 60:1	209:12 213:4	<b>rio</b> 248:6
revision 31:7	62:21 63:3	215:16 227:13	risk 12:11 21:3
68:2	65:3,10 67:9	230:11 234:14	21:10 47:25
revisions 26:12	68:5,15 76:15	237:25 243:16	80:3 105:15
73:25,25	76:24 77:22	248:9 250:1,7	117:25 145:17
203:13 240:3	83:1 84:6,6,14	250:22 254:11	164:7 165:25
241:1	86:4 87:9,12	254:13 255:10	170:6,6 173:15
revisit 113:9	88:18,19,24	256:25 257:11	178:7 181:17
133:11,15,16	89:10 91:3,5	257:16,20	195:2 196:8
revolution	91:18,24 94:5	258:1 260:6,11	197:2,18 198:1
235:21	94:25 97:6,8	260:22 261:2	201:18 206:18
	98:20 99:17	261:13,15,23	207:10 208:20

# [risk - s]

215:13,23	115:2 125:2	102:15 115:9	70:17 77:1,4
216:5 218:1,20	136:11 175:16	115:10 116:21	108:14 114:20
220:2,5,7	175:19	116:25 117:7	114:21 115:6
221:24 222:7,8	<b>room</b> 14:11	118:1,12,16,25	115:11,17,22
222:9,12	114:12 115:16	119:2,4,7,11,16	137:9,12
226:20 227:9	115:23 132:21	120:11,19	142:17 148:6,7
227:14,19	238:24 239:9	130:25 131:17	153:4 160:4,8
271:5 273:6,10	239:12 241:6	133:11 144:23	160:8,12
276:15 278:5,8	255:13 275:20	145:21 154:24	168:25 171:6
278:12,17,18	roswell 2:16	158:21 159:17	171:22 172:9
279:2 280:7	<b>rough</b> 103:11	159:18 164:16	172:10,11,18
281:3 284:19	roughly 271:2	170:24 172:14	172:19 173:1
<b>riskier</b> 125:16	272:17	172:14 176:4	178:11 209:2
125:17,23	routine 207:6	209:9 226:23	216:13,14
riskiest 22:4	224:7	241:18 242:5	225:13 229:17
24:25	royalties 87:9	243:4 248:7	239:4 242:6
<b>risks</b> 13:11	royalty 13:2	249:15 254:14	243:2 247:6
184:18,20,23	ruin 253:6	274:11,12	248:15 254:17
185:17,19	ruining 253:2	rulemaking 7:2	254:23 255:1
194:19 203:7	<b>rule</b> 7:1 12:13	16:2,18 20:17	260:8,20 269:9
205:22 211:17	19:6 22:14	57:14 112:24	270:15,18
212:10 223:12	25:13 30:23	120:14 171:14	282:1 284:5,20
236:19 249:2	33:6,17 34:16	171:17 175:19	<b>ruling</b> 128:22
268:18 278:24	35:19 43:16	199:10 206:11	<b>run</b> 60:7 88:21
279:3	45:22 46:12,25	213:10 255:25	88:22 189:15
<b>risky</b> 20:18,19	50:4 53:20,21	256:14 257:2	235:18 282:15
24:12 53:4,4	54:14,23,23	rulemakings	running 9:10
53:11 60:12,12	55:6 60:23	18:19 115:1	runs 244:12
60:13,14 107:1	63:8 64:3 65:2	167:23	<b>rural</b> 13:4
107:3 229:14	65:12 66:12	<b>rules</b> 5:12 7:3,6	242:14 245:10
river 243:24	67:6 70:4	7:13 17:15	249:5
<b>road</b> 180:8	73:21 74:13	33:7 47:12,15	S
<b>role</b> 19:18	78:12 79:16	52:12 64:9	s 1:6 2:1 3:1
39:21 46:16	82:23 85:12	65:4,7,14	11:22 239:17
64:24 99:8	93:22 101:20	67:25 68:12,23	241:10 247:22

# [sad - see]

sad 8:8 253:8,8	275:18	<b>se</b> 105:6	secure 173:6
safe 38:20	says 58:23	seasonal	196:14
83:10 103:19	65:15 66:10	185:22	secured 199:2
230:23 249:11	67:4,16 70:6,9	<b>sec</b> 229:6	securities 229:4
safeguarding	73:13 151:21	<b>second</b> 16:25	see 6:19 10:23
167:16	218:25 219:2,2	26:23 32:21	11:15 14:10,13
safeguards	219:2 251:10	66:14 72:19,23	22:24 26:2
142:14,17	<b>scaled</b> 204:17	73:2 75:10	27:16 30:14
safely 12:25	schedule	93:9 104:20	35:10 39:23,25
23:2	202:23 212:8	108:10 137:22	41:13 42:24
<b>saint</b> 1:6	scheduling	137:22 143:17	65:8 69:15
<b>sample</b> 147:22	187:23	214:16 230:8	70:14 72:15
148:2	scholarships	240:10 246:1	73:6 79:3,5
<b>san</b> 194:14	244:20	secondary	80:11 84:19
243:19	<b>school</b> 10:15,17	161:14 233:14	86:1,7 88:7,8
<b>sand</b> 151:14	10:25 11:2	secretary	88:13 91:7
235:12	165:24	109:17	104:2 108:23
santa 1:7 2:4	science 10:6	section 17:24	122:11,24
2:11,22 3:14	<b>scope</b> 76:3 99:7	19:5 21:14,23	123:1 126:11
10:17,24	99:15 126:21	26:17 27:16	128:24 131:7
satisfies 216:12	152:22 176:16	30:5,14 31:11	131:12,15
save 262:15	176:23 196:17	31:13 34:4,5,6	132:6,25 133:7
saw 10:25	196:21 198:10	63:6 66:5,14	133:18 137:11
89:20 127:22	screen 61:21	67:4,5,13,16,17	143:23 144:9
164:14 206:1	62:20 65:7,14	67:18 68:1,8,9	144:11 147:21
222:10 233:15	65:17 68:8	69:13 70:2	147:24,24,25
239:11 269:7	70:13,17 75:23	71:1,23 73:12	148:1 151:18
281:22	84:11,25 86:2	73:13 74:5	164:3,6,6,7,17
<b>sayer</b> 3:9,12	109:12 135:20	110:9 140:15	164:21 165:18
110:17 157:24	147:12,21	202:4 241:1	166:1 180:7,8
saying 27:6	151:17 152:6	sections 18:5	184:23 211:10
63:24 73:6	152:11 155:18	66:9 207:2	212:11 218:7
123:1 126:8,14	262:15	269:9	219:1 234:4
132:15,18,25	<b>scroll</b> 85:25	<b>sector</b> 10:14	239:11 249:23
133:8 191:9	86:6 88:9	232:11	252:1 254:1

# [see - shortly]

		I	
255:12 259:2,9	sense 24:10	services 231:17	shanor 2:15
261:8 270:10	33:21 57:14	<b>serving</b> 212:18	<b>shapes</b> 115:15
282:12 284:6	169:1 172:20	<b>session</b> 5:9,21	<b>share</b> 61:21
seeing 87:2	173:25 174:9	11:13,13	84:11 109:12
162:1 191:9	178:10 184:4	238:24 250:3,3	127:18 135:20
231:19 234:9	191:12,13	253:22 255:8	151:17 155:18
262:19 280:18	247:2 249:16	set 33:22 49:4	177:20 193:7
seek 74:8 138:4	282:7	66:12 67:6	shared 186:8
seeking 19:8	sensible 173:15	69:22 70:10	sharing 86:1
26:13 64:25	sensing 97:18	76:1,24 94:13	sharpen 51:10
65:22,24 66:2	sensitive 18:7	118:7 146:25	sheila 5:18
66:3 137:25	37:22 45:1	175:23 199:11	11:17 135:17
seem 181:12	48:3 116:23	276:4 288:8	239:9 243:7
201:23 212:9	117:8	<b>sets</b> 62:16	<b>shell</b> 228:24
212:20	sentence 72:10	183:2 186:19	<b>shift</b> 5:25 13:14
seems 48:1	73:3	215:3	249:25 250:8
seen 18:18,21	sentences	settled 125:8	shocking
36:6 43:4	131:21	settlement	234:20
52:20,21	separate 54:25	50:17 51:3	<b>shoot</b> 267:21
109:23 129:21	104:17 179:21	seven 5:8	<b>short</b> 15:18
141:11,22	209:1	133:12 143:6	21:24 47:8
147:13 156:14	separately	143:10 148:4	78:4 79:15
234:11 236:16	54:16 198:17	164:21 176:24	146:25 174:6
242:12 271:21	sequence 223:7	213:11 238:20	186:5 232:15
273:10 276:17	sequestration	244:6 258:2	233:2,9,24
285:17 286:19	220:18 269:2	several 52:21	237:24 264:1
selective	serious 12:12	59:21 84:15	281:20
237:18	195:7 240:19	150:18 160:16	shortened
sell 79:20 80:24	<b>serve</b> 37:4	178:23 232:15	227:18
81:18 117:16	225:13 280:21	<b>shack</b> 275:20	shortening
273:18	284:20 285:23	<b>shale</b> 235:21	187:1 223:2
<b>selling</b> 80:4,10	286:8	<b>shallow</b> 233:19	shorthand
81:2 273:24	<b>serves</b> 33:25	shandler 1:24	224:15 288:8
<b>send</b> 255:3	49:10	shannon 7:16	shortly 16:11
		7:17	

# [show - slide]

10.10	.1 20.2.00.10		•4 4 20 21
show 18:12	side 38:2 99:19	similar 54:22	situation 29:21
40:18,22,25	103:18 167:8	57:2 72:4 81:7	33:12 54:22
44:17 53:5	<b>sides</b> 102:23	95:20 97:22	56:7 131:14
120:17 139:9	sidewalk	138:14 179:11	247:10
142:19 156:17	286:25	182:22 203:1	situations
165:5,8 204:9	sierra 6:24	210:11 277:7	129:13 131:12
211:16 242:6	243:20 248:6	284:8	<b>six</b> 98:7 113:11
<b>showed</b> 149:25	sighted 186:5	similarly 106:5	126:4 164:16
153:10 273:12	237:24	<b>simple</b> 160:24	233:6 258:2
277:8	<b>sign</b> 6:13	simplify 217:7	<b>sixth</b> 217:8
showing 43:3	<b>signa</b> 241:6,9	simplifying	<b>size</b> 137:20
51:21 72:5	241:16	47:19	201:15 203:21
75:10,11 97:22	signature	simplistic	205:24 206:22
111:20 118:17	288:16	93:17	211:19,21
118:23 119:1	significance	<b>simply</b> 223:23	215:12 229:21
143:14 223:12	189:13 195:24	237:24 248:20	<b>sized</b> 12:14
<b>shown</b> 137:17	significant 26:6	simultaneous	<b>sizes</b> 115:15
138:16 222:20	40:20 86:8	216:15	<b>skip</b> 20:11 44:1
<b>shows</b> 30:9	89:8 102:10	<b>single</b> 64:19	<b>slide</b> 17:19 18:4
40:6 86:5	103:2 149:21	98:12 104:10	18:12 20:5,10
147:14,17	165:22 167:23	104:21 123:18	23:14,17 25:8
153:14 164:13	168:7 189:6	190:3 201:4	25:12 26:9,17
197:8 198:13	193:8,13	216:15 223:25	28:11,17,17
shrinking	204:12 208:23	235:9 256:19	29:10,10,18,25
13:21	224:19 227:8	257:23 258:13	30:8,9,20,20
<b>shut</b> 90:19,21	229:20 233:7	singular 105:22	31:4,10,15,17
91:23 150:19	233:10 265:20	sir 177:23	32:14,16,16
185:24,25	273:12 285:17	sit 124:20	34:4,25 36:24
233:5 263:2	significantly	260:9	37:24 38:5,8
shuttering 13:1	86:9,10,22	site 151:21	38:22,22 40:6
sic 113:11	87:15 103:10	187:24 271:25	40:10 41:22
251:10	103:19 179:7	273:21,22	45:4 65:6
sick 17:8,12	<b>signing</b> 133:24	sites 242:12	121:6 122:3,16
251:4	silly 180:18	<b>sitting</b> 112:16	123:8 127:13
		243:24	127:25 128:11

# [slide - speak]

	T	Т.	
128:12 129:1	222:2 224:11	<b>sold</b> 79:24	164:24 188:6
130:17 131:20	225:5 226:4	202:7,8	274:19
137:6 138:10	227:15 228:5	<b>sole</b> 183:3	<b>sound</b> 76:4
139:20 140:10	232:4 234:15	<b>solely</b> 185:20	126:23 225:3
141:7 142:13	237:2,5	<b>solid</b> 42:15	257:20 262:21
147:6 149:24	<b>slides</b> 17:20	169:3	263:5 264:17
159:13 161:10	18:6 31:3 68:4	solution 13:9	271:5 272:1,13
161:11 163:19	96:21 121:5	173:24	279:12,22
175:14 176:18	138:14 159:10	solutions	283:12 285:14
178:19 179:15	166:22 175:9	288:17	sounded 33:18
179:19 181:1,3	176:12,14	somebody	sounds 46:6
181:21 182:14	226:4 230:3	170:22 218:8	121:21 201:14
183:2,19	slightly 30:16	253:16 286:21	264:8 271:7,10
184:17 185:16	<b>slo</b> 221:16	someone's	271:11 272:15
186:17,22,22	<b>small</b> 12:14	51:19 76:16	<b>source</b> 230:25
187:14 188:8	65:8 167:11	somewhat 48:2	240:21
188:18,19	170:25 185:1	93:14 97:22	<b>sources</b> 258:21
189:2,2,11,11	199:4 203:21	236:20	<b>south</b> 2:10
189:13,21	203:23 207:4,5	<b>soon</b> 24:11	141:11 142:4
190:2,6,7,17	208:4 211:21	129:2	southeast
191:17 192:9	229:12 233:14	<b>sorry</b> 16:6	254:15
193:1 195:2,20	242:20 245:10	20:12 61:21	southeastern
195:23,23	254:15,18,18	66:1,20 70:12	243:23
197:7,16 198:9	255:2 265:10	70:15 84:8	southern
198:21 199:14	275:20 278:1	113:10,11	244:25 245:11
200:14,24	282:17,17	132:4 245:25	southwestern
202:15 203:6,9	285:9,18	<b>sort</b> 31:25	234:21,22
204:6 205:3	<b>smaller</b> 170:20	54:21 55:1	<b>space</b> 167:8
206:9 207:14	184:25 204:1	95:10 98:25	187:18
207:22 208:11	207:4 208:14	101:8 210:11	spacing 37:14
209:13,22	283:9	263:20 264:11	37:16 141:13
210:2,9,15,17	<b>smart</b> 17:9	264:12 277:12	141:14,15,23
212:1,12 213:7	<b>solar</b> 252:9	283:24	<b>speak</b> 5:20 6:21
214:17 218:12	253:7,11	<b>sorts</b> 94:21	6:25 10:2
219:24 220:13		112:2 124:12	27:23 36:8

# [speak - state]

02.5.02.22	•6• 1 67.01	11 01 05	221 12
82:5 83:22	specified 67:21	<b>spike</b> 41:21,25	231:13
102:21 122:20	specifies 67:19	42:3	standing
164:23	specify 66:22	<b>spite</b> 251:22	109:16
speaking 80:17	67:14,20	<b>spoke</b> 102:3	standpoint
81:5 241:17	specifying 37:3	<b>sponsor</b> 245:14	82:9 140:8,8
248:4	speculate	252:14	172:21 211:5,9
specific 8:17	180:18,21,21	<b>spot</b> 105:17	stands 54:8
9:3,13 20:25	speculation	<b>square</b> 276:24	133:11
21:13 32:19	76:7 113:15,18	280:6	<b>star</b> 11:15
33:10,24 35:11	286:23	<b>st</b> 2:10	253:24
37:10 40:11	speculative	stability 178:10	<b>start</b> 61:19
46:24 83:18	46:21 121:15	stable 13:5	121:5 159:13
85:22 93:3	180:4,16,25	stacked 196:2	172:2 175:15
95:10 98:17	181:12,13,14	stacking	177:17 179:19
100:7 107:25	181:25 182:9	213:20	195:23 196:23
108:5 119:13	214:7 234:5	<b>staff</b> 200:6,7	199:3 207:19
143:13 152:13	236:11,20	staffing 203:18	223:7 235:18
153:1 158:25	<b>speed</b> 99:9	<b>stage</b> 168:4	239:22 241:14
191:14 211:21	speedily 213:5	235:9,10	243:16 246:8
216:16 223:12	<b>spell</b> 5:10 6:6	<b>stages</b> 43:24	248:1 250:23
262:17 265:25	9:20 11:19	44:1	254:11
278:22 282:20	15:3 135:22	stake 252:12	started 50:7
specifically	174:14 239:2	stakeholders	53:24,24 54:1
36:25 46:16	239:14 241:7	115:15 170:1	79:10 144:9
71:11 95:23	243:9 246:1	205:21	150:3 232:21
108:11 147:21	247:20 250:15	stamped 69:12	236:1
149:11 152:25	254:4	<b>stand</b> 15:1	starting 142:6
153:12 168:15	<b>spend</b> 176:13	27:19 96:9	190:2 196:11
191:15 272:11	spending	161:7 239:13	218:12 223:19
specificity 33:7	208:21	263:7	279:6
33:8 131:15	<b>spent</b> 136:15	standard	starts 279:14
specifics 44:4	209:7 241:20	221:12 231:4	<b>state</b> 1:2 8:2,25
83:22 122:20	242:10 243:20	standards	9:6 10:10,15
153:13	244:10 248:19	12:18 181:18	10:21 13:1,3
		216:25 231:11	15:14 20:20

# [state - stenographic]

27:17,20 38:20	275:7,19 279:5	<b>stating</b> 279:11	144:16,19,20
53:11 87:5,6	279:18,25	statistical	145:13 155:21
90:2 91:4 96:7	282:8 283:8,17	259:3	155:22,23
99:18 106:4	284:19	statistically	156:2,6,15
107:1 109:7,11	state's 59:7	40:19	157:7,8 158:18
109:17 118:8	167:14 205:16	statistics 165:4	159:19 164:4
125:1 128:14	205:18 207:24	258:20	188:25 189:19
136:10 155:16	240:7 271:23	status 17:6	190:5 197:10
164:8 167:19	272:9,23	24:5,16 25:1	197:20 212:22
171:4 173:10	<b>stated</b> 30:16	25:24 34:6,14	223:25 260:6
175:18 176:3,7	68:10,16	34:24 35:19,25	260:10 269:12
178:14,24	131:24 164:1	36:16,25 37:9	269:17
179:8 194:12	262:25 275:15	38:6,12 43:6	statuses 93:4
194:16 195:8	275:16 285:22	46:4 50:1,5	93:18 101:17
195:11,15	statement 4:4	60:1 62:2,10	statute 16:23
197:4 198:8	78:15 123:2,5	62:10,12 63:8	19:3 20:23
203:2 207:25	165:15 166:23	63:10,15,25	24:3,13,15
210:21,21	167:1 263:7	64:8,9 65:13	25:4 58:11
211:12,12	statements	65:21,25 66:3	64:22 66:8,22
213:2 214:4	130:24 160:2	66:11,17 67:17	67:4 154:14
218:7 219:22	<b>states</b> 10:22	67:19,20,23	169:11
222:1 231:4	13:12 26:24	72:3,20 73:1	statutorily
232:9 239:2,14	176:7 192:4	73:17 76:13	169:5
240:17 241:7	193:17 196:9	77:7 85:19	statutory 17:7
241:21 242:2	202:20 203:3	86:18 93:3,19	123:7 169:10
242:19 243:9	204:8 206:15	95:3,23 100:4	169:13 171:12
244:25 246:20	211:9 212:19	100:11,13,18	171:13
247:1,8 248:19	217:17 218:16	101:10,11,15	<b>stay</b> 69:9
251:9 252:9	221:15 228:10	129:6 130:8	121:22 125:12
253:6 255:3	257:8,22	137:8,10,13,14	130:21 139:20
258:10 262:25	268:21 273:9	137:17 138:1,5	staying 35:7
268:1 269:23	statewide	138:8,23	stays 122:1
271:13 273:6	221:22 242:17	140:12,16,21	stems 171:11
273:17 274:7	<b>static</b> 200:11	141:1,8 142:15	stenographic
274:13,14,25		143:10 144:7	288:8

# [step - substantive]

step 162:20	<b>street</b> 3:4 180:9	structures	139:22 178:18
247:8	288:18	110:2 213:23	198:10 230:19
stepped 108:24	strengths	217:9	231:9 256:13
110:16	145:12		subjective
		struggling 40:16	
<b>steps</b> 112:2 <b>steward</b> 171:2	strike 19:4,10	students 10:25	76:15,21
	20:23 21:22		126:17
stewardships	27:17 30:18	studied 55:16	subjectivity
12:7	74:1 76:24	studies 40:11	181:16
stick 42:2 43:16	89:8 121:14,19	102:14	<b>subjects</b> 127:22
stimulate	122:3 128:13	study 44:8	127:23 244:2
234:13	129:2 131:21	102:20	submission
stimulating	187:6	<b>stuff</b> 176:9	52:3
220:17	strikeouts	186:3 191:4	<b>submit</b> 5:16
<b>stop</b> 41:15	125:25	200:8 209:5	90:8 97:21
100:6 108:1	strikes 68:2	236:9,25	137:24 188:9
stopping 74:7	striking 18:12	268:12 269:25	239:8
<b>storage</b> 268:23	28:1 37:24	273:18 274:1	submitted
<b>stories</b> 113:16	121:10	282:11	190:8
<b>story</b> 94:2	stripper 264:11	<b>suazo</b> 3:5 4:5	submitting
112:6,15,21	264:16,25	4:10,17 110:19	211:24
<b>stove</b> 252:8	267:11	111:3,4 114:6	subpart 21:16
stranded	<b>strong</b> 130:20	114:7,9 116:1	23:18 25:14
204:19	217:14 241:18	157:25 158:1	subsection 30:2
strategic	248:7	166:20,21	63:9 65:19
184:21	stronger 243:1	167:1,4 174:3	69:23 70:2
strategically	249:17	174:7,22,23	72:9 74:18
184:19	<b>struck</b> 35:10	175:4 176:13	138:22 140:14
strategies	68:9 122:11	176:19 230:2,8	212:3
279:22 280:4	131:5	230:10 237:25	subsequent
280:12	structure 95:2	238:12	31:6 75:4
strategy 191:23	95:15,20	subdivisions	substantial
<b>streak</b> 134:19	105:21 106:9	79:23	59:23 102:4
134:21	106:17,22	subject 66:23	211:17
streams 13:23	217:12	69:24 71:1	substantive
		76:3,6 126:22	115:6

# [successful - ta]

successful	summation	63:22 65:18	surrounding
139:4 150:11	57:20	88:18 93:7	52:22 81:9
<b>sudden</b> 165:21	<b>summer</b> 79:10	99:6 106:24	survey 281:2
sufficient 7:9	sun 252:6	109:21 111:7	sustained 41:14
28:23 157:6	<b>super</b> 221:7	117:14,15,18	swear 5:12
262:10 263:17	258:12	129:11 136:12	6:15,17 7:21
sufficiently	<b>supply</b> 242:21	136:20 137:9	9:22,24 11:23
25:2	support 7:2	138:13 159:24	15:5 75:15
suggest 132:5	8:10 13:20	162:25 165:3	136:1 174:18
205:20 213:18	26:12 35:6	165:12 167:10	239:4,20
suggested 32:4	36:11 105:21	168:25 172:9	241:12 243:13
123:25	106:9,21 107:7	172:19 184:7	246:5 247:23
suggesting	121:23 167:13	203:10 205:5	250:19 254:8
132:23 277:19	222:19 241:18	237:6 241:9	<b>sworn</b> 15:10
277:22	244:9,18,20	249:18 254:22	136:7 175:2
suggestion	245:15 248:7	255:1 258:18	synonymous
262:3	254:16	262:20 275:12	193:14
suggestions	supported	282:12 284:9	<b>system</b> 8:11
32:25 58:15	178:21	285:7	129:25 221:13
127:6,9	supporting	<b>surety</b> 173:3	278:17 279:2
suggests 224:14	10:10 125:11	200:20 227:22	systems 186:1
<b>suite</b> 3:4,14	158:21 167:18	227:25	280:19
288:18	168:1	surface 21:5	t
summaries	supports 12:6	118:5 188:3	t 7:20,20
258:17	13:19 32:22	221:17 273:24	135:24 247:22
summarize	244:25	surmise 52:23	254:7
75:25 146:3	suppose 82:19	surprise 107:19	ta 24:5,16 25:1
summarizes	supreme 235:1	surprised 98:6	34:6,14,24
40:5	sure 8:18 9:6	107:15,16,18	35:7,19,25
summary 15:22	16:20 19:9,24	surrebuttal	36:16,25 38:6
18:4 20:13	23:6,22 30:6	28:8,10 47:7,8	38:12 45:25
100:14 209:24	30:13 35:17	48:3 49:17	46:3 50:1,5
238:7 268:7	36:10 38:9	230:3,14 237:5	61:20 62:18
271:1	48:11 55:9	238:3,8	64:8 65:13
	60:19 62:7,9		67:25 68:11,13

# [ta - tell]

68:24 71:24	185:23 187:21	160:2,4 163:2	taxes 87:8
72:3,19 73:1	203:25 229:9	179:11 197:18	taxing 252:15
75:4,8,9,11	234:4,12	204:19 205:19	taxpayer
76:12 92:4	236:19 247:3	220:16 262:7	246:11
129:6 133:7	247:14 259:12	263:24,25	taxpayers
137:13 138:1	270:6,16,19	talking 68:4	246:18 248:21
139:2,6 140:16	274:16 286:17	80:15,16 81:12	249:20
140:21,23	takeaway	84:20 95:5,8	teacher 10:15
141:1 143:10	98:20,20,25	106:17 124:7,8	teachers 10:23
144:19,20	99:4	133:4 149:15	teaching 11:2
145:13,14	<b>taken</b> 164:19	154:1,8 160:13	244:5,5
154:20 159:19	165:9 288:5	182:12 201:12	team 40:21
161:1,4 162:12	takes 37:20	233:5 266:8,9	90:24
164:4 189:9,19	124:2 140:5,9	266:10,13	teams 6:20
205:18 224:13	165:19 183:17	274:8 280:15	technical 14:12
260:10	185:2 186:3	281:4,15	38:1 76:5
<b>ta'd</b> 137:19	273:15	<b>talks</b> 31:18	126:23 175:25
139:11 153:9	talk 34:21	137:23 264:21	178:12 205:21
154:3,4,6	40:16 48:12	tanks 273:25	208:21 212:23
155:1 160:17	52:1 53:16	tannis 2:5	234:16 255:11
163:4	56:24 83:22	taos 252:4	256:18 258:13
<b>tab</b> 89:16	94:15 107:9	target 22:3	technically
<b>table</b> 61:17	111:13 115:24	24:24 32:24	236:6 265:14
79:7 87:20	121:9 139:8	48:22 58:1	technologies
193:25	141:6 175:16	60:11 95:19	206:5
<b>tables</b> 259:7	189:4 198:6	141:17 197:24	technology 8:5
tail 90:25	200:21 201:20	216:24	12:22 22:25
tailor 142:22	210:23,24	targeted 13:10	39:24 139:19
tailored 202:12	220:19 227:23	17:15 52:15	179:2 230:21
take 10:25 15:1	236:25 264:11	222:14	236:13 237:3,7
77:25 135:5	270:20 285:7	tas 45:25 50:9	237:12,19,23
139:14 141:11	<b>talked</b> 26:19	taught 7:4 8:4	tell 5:13 6:16
142:3 165:4	48:21 97:23	244:3	7:22 9:23,24
166:10 174:5,6	98:19 112:5	tax 13:1 182:5	11:24 15:5
174:8,11 184:9	124:16 125:15	193:10 197:4	17:20 20:5

# [tell - testimony]

30:4 48:19	64:25 65:22	279:21 280:3	51:25 52:6
57:3 60:3 85:6	66:4,11 67:23	280:11	53:8 57:23
88:4,5,5,20	71:10,13 73:14	terms 18:19	58:16 69:3,8
89:4 96:13	73:17 137:7,9	23:8 62:1 95:5	69:12 70:8
112:6,16,21	138:4,7,12,23	97:24 128:20	75:19,20 77:12
115:8 136:1	140:12 141:8	169:4 193:3	78:13 83:8
148:21 152:1,1	142:14 143:4	260:19,24	84:15,16 94:24
171:9 174:19	143:14 144:16	terrific 77:25	98:18 99:7,16
181:2 239:4,20	155:20,21,23	territory 8:25	109:8,22,23,24
241:12 243:13	156:15,22	198:23	113:10 114:15
246:6 247:24	157:6,8 158:18	tertiary 161:14	118:23 121:3
250:20 251:11	188:11,20	test 142:18	123:2,24
254:9 268:15	190:4 223:5,18	<b>tested</b> 115:17	128:19 129:4
telling 43:5	223:20 224:12	testified 15:10	134:2,14 137:1
112:23	260:6,10,15	20:1 48:13	137:4 143:2
temp 23:23	269:12,16	50:21 52:7	146:14 147:8,9
temporarily	<b>tempted</b> 134:18	64:13,22 75:24	148:9 152:23
62:2 63:7,10	ten 66:18 78:1	111:15 113:2	153:8 154:17
64:14 65:20,25	144:8,20 151:9	116:24 129:21	154:19,23
66:3,17 67:16	194:3 208:14	136:7 175:2	155:17 162:15
67:19 73:16	209:19 242:18	176:1 201:22	162:19 163:1
137:13 142:23	<b>tend</b> 147:18	268:6 273:14	163:25 166:7
144:7 146:6	206:1 220:4	testify 50:20	166:16 170:4
177:4,6 178:16	223:10 262:19	165:5 270:23	175:15 176:17
186:24 187:4	tends 134:9	testifying 16:2	176:21,23
187:16 190:5	term 22:8	testimony 4:21	177:22 188:9
197:10,20	72:10 132:9	4:21 14:23	190:8,24 191:5
218:19 220:1,6	169:1 172:18	15:24 16:6,10	196:24 205:3
220:10 224:3	178:16 180:24	16:14 28:9	206:12,14
224:24 227:4	181:14 182:7	31:20,21 32:3	207:13 213:6
232:20	193:24 214:5	34:10 36:18	218:10,11
temporary 17:5	223:14 225:20	38:23,25,25	220:24 225:19
24:1 25:23	225:22 229:3	39:4,9,12 40:4	230:12 234:16
41:15 62:1,9	234:6 268:23	47:9,11 49:7	234:18 237:5
62:10,12 63:14	272:23 276:15	49:17 50:12,18	238:1,4,6,8,14
-			

# [testimony - things]

238:15 255:23	69:1 77:12,13	175:13 177:16	253:17
255:24 256:3,6	78:6,17,19	178:18 179:14	<b>things</b> 5:10 8:8
256:9,17,22	79:18 82:4	181:1 200:14	21:9 28:8
258:7,16,20	83:7 84:9	210:15 226:3	29:13 33:10
259:2,7 262:1	85:24 92:15	237:25 238:12	35:17 37:7
262:1,5,25	99:21 100:7	239:16,19,23	46:5 47:1,3
263:10,18,25	101:4 102:2	241:3,4,11	89:2 90:19
264:10 273:2	103:23 108:18	243:3,5,18	104:17 113:24
277:13 278:5	108:19,20	245:18,20	115:25 120:2
278:11 283:2	109:8 110:12	246:9 247:15	127:2 131:14
283:25 285:2	110:13 111:1,2	247:16 248:2	168:19 170:8
285:23 286:4	114:2,3,4	249:20,21	176:11 177:24
287:3	116:1,3,5	250:22 253:9	178:17 180:10
testing 23:2	120:22 121:5,6	253:19 254:8	181:19 183:18
141:1 251:1	122:16 125:9	255:5,15,23	184:15 185:14
286:15	125:14 128:24	259:20 284:15	188:3,7 192:23
tethered 224:1	134:1,3,14,15	287:2,4	194:15 200:11
texas 13:15	134:16 135:25	<b>thanks</b> 60:21	200:12,22
136:13,21	136:3,5,17	121:2 161:11	201:25 203:1,4
150:23 202:6	138:6 140:10	181:20 188:8	205:25 206:1,6
202:21 230:17	142:13 143:1	206:8	208:6,7,19
245:3,7 253:2	143:18 146:12	<b>that'd</b> 163:19	211:16 215:25
253:4 274:13	146:20,22,24	207:21	220:15 222:10
text 71:20	148:2,24 149:1	<b>theory</b> 152:15	222:21 223:9
thank 5:22 6:5	149:3 151:13	153:1	228:4,22 231:2
6:22 7:14,15	155:7,8,11,17	thing 29:18	231:7 233:24
7:24 9:14,15	157:16,17,22	37:23 89:2	234:9 236:17
9:25 11:9,10	157:23 158:6,9	94:20 96:19	237:22 239:1
12:1,2 14:4,6	158:23 159:5,7	110:5 124:21	252:18 253:15
15:2,7 17:13	159:12,13	169:10,12,20	270:2,7,9,13
45:11 50:11	163:6,8,11,15	170:12 172:13	273:18,20
60:21,24 61:3	163:17,21	200:9,11	274:19 278:15
61:7,12,14	166:6,9,15,17	203:14 204:21	278:18 279:4
62:8 65:12	166:21 174:1,2	210:11 231:15	280:20 281:3,8
66:7,14 67:1	174:21,23	235:14 253:8	281:11,25

# [things - thresholds]

292.6 12 14	76:19,20 78:16	171.11 15 22	thoughts 70.9
282:6,13,14 284:9 286:17	79:9,12 81:8	171:11,15,23 171:24 174:8	thoughts 79:8
	<i>'</i>		0222 00002 10702
think 8:23	82:20,21 83:6	177:25 180:10	threading
19:14,21 20:1	84:19 89:8	184:10,17	106:24 124:25
20:23 21:3,9	95:18,19 96:3	189:20,21	threats 240:20
21:24 23:5,14	96:8,8 98:18	190:6 191:8,8	three 5:14
23:15,16 25:1	100:9 105:3,17	193:13,16	16:22 40:20,21
25:8,13 26:17	106:3,23 107:4	196:9 200:4	40:23 41:3
27:4,12,14,18	107:6,16	202:11 203:19	43:9 44:17
28:1,12,13	108:23 110:4	213:4 217:4	53:17 59:10
29:1,1,12,18	110:11 111:25	220:23 222:19	91:16 104:4,17
30:5,8,21 31:1	112:20 115:9	226:1 230:6	105:1,3 111:14
31:15 32:7,23	115:23 118:2	233:19 234:15	112:7 113:3,16
33:9,16 34:25	122:2,8 123:1	237:2 250:7,8	124:7 137:10
35:18 36:6,18	123:19 125:13	250:12 252:12	140:17,24
37:1 38:3,7	125:20,22	252:25 256:15	175:9 184:2
39:14,15 40:4	126:11,12	256:21 262:25	187:10 194:6
40:7 42:19	127:9 128:4,6	263:10,24	194:10 204:9
44:12,16,20	129:1,24 130:3	268:6 272:4,5	239:7 270:9,9
45:21,24 46:9	130:23 131:4	273:8 280:15	270:13
46:10 47:23,24	131:15 133:1	280:17 282:3,4	<b>threes</b> 43:16
48:1,10,12,21	140:3 145:11	thinking 40:15	threshold 49:3
49:2,6,12 53:2	145:18 147:25	54:2 270:4,8	58:17 59:12,12
53:3,3,5 54:22	149:15 152:22	277:13	59:16 94:8
55:4,8,23,24	154:14,16	<b>third</b> 17:4 46:3	104:14 105:20
56:4,8 58:19	156:13,14,17	96:14 104:13	106:6,7 199:4
58:20,22 59:1	157:5 161:5	104:20 215:16	199:11 219:7
59:4,14,20	162:8 163:25	218:22 240:14	225:13,25
60:14,16,18	164:1,4,10,13	<b>thirty</b> 183:11	262:3,9 263:17
61:22 62:2,22	165:14,17,18	thought 17:9	264:6
63:17,22,24	166:2,7,19	27:25 64:4	thresholds
65:9 66:25	168:8 169:20	172:8 175:10	105:11 181:5
67:10,21 68:3	169:24 170:3	234:20 235:16	191:24 215:1,3
70:19 74:19,23	170:11,15,19	thoughtful	226:14
75:15,18 76:15	170:23 171:4,9	163:25	
·	•		

# [thrilled - touch]

	100 0 100 1 6		20 < 5 220 25
thrilled 10:8	120:9 123:16	timeframes	206:7 220:25
thrive 167:19	124:24 126:21	154:2,8 188:4	228:17 236:21
254:23	129:8,12	timeline 19:18	238:1 248:4
<b>thriving</b> 173:21	131:25 132:12	124:22 143:5	255:23 263:1
throw 250:11	136:22 139:1	145:16,24	263:11 268:6
<b>tie</b> 12:20	139:14 141:16	158:18	270:24 273:14
<b>tied</b> 137:14	143:3,21,21	timelines	today's 236:13
198:23 222:9	144:8,11	139:18 142:1	together
223:11	145:10 146:7	187:19 188:1	115:23 117:24
tier 196:12	147:16,19	<b>timely</b> 161:21	120:17 140:6
<b>tiered</b> 213:22	148:5,11,13	<b>times</b> 10:8	272:7
217:8,11	152:18 156:20	79:25 99:1	<b>toggle</b> 30:12
<b>tiers</b> 217:6	163:7,16 166:7	156:17 164:6	<b>told</b> 43:9
tiffany 4:7	167:24 169:25	178:22 229:3	113:17 205:1
14:17,23 15:9	170:23 173:17	229:17,25	236:5,15
15:15 78:13,14	173:25 176:13	<b>timing</b> 79:6	tom 147:8
<b>tight</b> 183:12	183:17 185:2	124:8 125:7	tomorrow
<b>till</b> 194:9	185:17,20	140:5 200:1	250:4
time 11:2 14:4	187:6 197:25	<b>tired</b> 114:11	<b>tongue</b> 137:14
14:8 22:11	202:7 205:6	<b>tisdel</b> 2:6,6	took 54:24 85:3
26:22 28:22	209:7 218:12	4:17 255:14,15	85:17 90:2
31:17 33:15	238:3 239:22	255:18,20	101:9 144:6
37:20 39:23	241:14 242:10	259:17 284:13	150:4 154:9
40:1 43:7,10	243:17 245:2	284:15,17	tools 222:15
43:11 51:18	245:19 246:8	287:2,5	top 88:9 128:1
61:13 64:1	248:1 250:23	<b>title</b> 63:6	<b>topics</b> 45:15
72:11,19 76:3	254:12 255:8	today 11:4,13	torpedoes
77:20 79:15	257:20 260:4,9	14:16,19 16:19	235:4
86:3,15 90:24	262:15 266:8	57:8 109:8	total 54:19 98:3
93:1 97:4	266:20 270:7	112:16 113:17	102:25 103:9
98:12,15	286:17	121:3 124:20	103:14
100:11 103:8	timeframe	155:17 163:16	<b>totally</b> 36:17
106:10 108:18	140:9 142:22	163:25 165:5	58:6 182:9
111:12,21	143:9 228:2	166:7 167:5,9	touch 23:5
114:2 115:14		169:1 175:6,14	28:13 30:10,11

# [touch - two]

50 11 50 11		4 • 1 44410	100 14 22
52:11 59:11	transferring	triple 144:12	189:14,22
172:24 237:3	207:6 227:6	<b>tripp</b> 2:18	199:24,24
touched 23:24	transfers	trivial 224:18	200:7,11 208:9
27:18 29:13	192:18 212:2	trouble 96:23	211:6,14
38:7,9 40:7	219:14	<b>true</b> 36:3 44:15	236:24 250:9
194:23 209:19	translation	44:25 111:24	262:17 282:6
touches 37:2	27:22	125:23 197:21	283:13
38:6	treated 208:21	268:10 288:9	<b>tubing</b> 202:8
tough 180:5,15	tremaine 2:11	truly 47:25	tucker 2:23
181:18 183:1	4:8 77:15,17	105:15 191:14	4:12,14 14:21
191:16 192:23	77:22 78:5,22	209:17 274:2,5	135:10,11,12
211:4,22	78:24 79:1	<b>trump</b> 251:20	135:16,19
towards 26:2	84:10,13 99:19	<b>trust</b> 56:5	136:4,5,9
44:9	99:20,22	<b>truth</b> 5:13 6:16	146:12 152:21
town 245:5	108:17,21	7:22 9:23,24	158:7,8,11
toxins 248:17	114:14 116:8	11:24 15:6	159:5,11
249:3	118:14 119:14	136:1 174:19	163:21
toys 7:5	120:8 123:9	239:5,20	tulsa 228:15
<b>track</b> 46:7	134:12 146:20	241:12 243:14	<b>turn</b> 6:14 69:1
tracking	149:2	246:6 247:24	116:14 141:20
192:22 212:21	tremaine's	250:20 254:9	164:25 198:1
transaction	111:19	<b>try</b> 18:7,8	204:2 253:17
80:16 81:2	tremendously	32:24 69:13	270:13
82:10	8:10	112:4,20	turnaround
transactions	<b>tribal</b> 242:14	119:23 125:1	81:11 150:21
79:19 82:15,24	249:5 274:9	141:24 262:14	<b>turned</b> 40:25
83:4 204:13	<b>tried</b> 18:2	<b>trying</b> 31:25	turning 62:15
207:6	194:17 258:18	33:2 63:17,22	71:10 135:9
transcript 1:13	trigger 213:1	87:11 95:19	turns 165:20
4:3,23 5:2,11	215:7 225:1	96:10 101:7	tutoring 244:5
6:7 11:20 15:4	triggered	106:25 112:21	two 8:2 14:16
174:14 250:16	182:20 186:10	113:7 118:9	17:5 19:16
288:1,10	186:21 204:13	121:20 125:19	24:2,16 25:5
transfer 28:22	triggering	150:20 160:11	25:24 34:17,24
192:15 212:5	187:10 207:8,8	162:24 180:22	35:8,23 37:6

# [two - unit]

46:4 48:21	u	108:14 110:2,9	understandable
49:22 63:10	<b>u</b> 239:17	116:24 120:2	69:11
64:14,24 65:15	243:11 246:3	120:11 164:16	understanding
65:21 66:19,20	247:22 254:7	188:13 194:4	24:14 25:3
66:21 68:4	<b>u.s.</b> 176:10	198:11 207:15	36:16 38:19
72:4,11 75:11	230:24 281:2	212:3 219:8	49:24 50:3
94:4 98:7	uic 176:11	226:13 227:18	51:12 64:13
101:24 105:17	230:24	232:3 260:8	82:22 104:19
122:6,13	ultimately	265:10	151:23 182:16
127:15 128:1,2	13:22 90:9	underation	186:9,14,15
130:7 131:19	170:17,18	254:1,2,5,6,10	187:8,13 191:3
131:25 132:11	173:2 196:1	254:13 255:6	193:18
132:16,22	204:15,17	underground	understood
133:16 138:24	213:1 251:9	180:10 230:24	81:13 168:22
151:9 171:14	umbrella 55:1	286:12	uneconomic
189:1 194:11	unable 57:11	undermines	280:24
202:5,9 208:13	unaware	219:20 223:12	unethical
209:18 238:6	107:17	undermining	246:18
250:11,13	uncertainty	13:22 221:4	unfairly 57:22
253:9 270:2	130:5 181:16	understand	209:3
275:20 276:8	227:7,8	8:21 20:15	unforeseen
tying 224:24	unconsciona	24:18 37:21	225:21
226:4,12 286:7	246:17	38:15 48:4	unfortunate
<b>type</b> 81:23	unconventional	50:2,21 53:20	107:20 171:23
82:10 142:12	202:6 234:11	67:2 85:24	unfortunately
161:18 265:15	uncovered	90:12 93:7	160:1 237:6
269:13	201:5	94:23 124:25	266:6
<b>types</b> 36:14	<b>under</b> 24:17	129:10,15,20	unintended
161:23,24	25:4 45:25	135:15 141:19	20:24 41:7
232:6 237:16	46:1 48:23	148:23 160:11	203:19 214:3
typical 201:25	52:9,14 56:8	160:12 169:12	217:3
typically	64:15,23 65:14	171:20 173:8	unique 32:23
187:20 200:10	66:4 68:17	200:2 209:8	45:21 173:8
202:3	69:25 72:12,22	270:1 272:4	<b>unit</b> 139:10
	87:15 101:16	284:2 285:8	141:12 144:5
	1	1	

# [unit - values]

185:5 285:12	201:7 212:15	177:1,2 179:9	uses 181:8
285:13,24	218:1	179:16,17,20	209:2 214:8
286:2,8	<b>updates</b> 249:15	179:22,24	<b>using</b> 48:16
<b>units</b> 179:6	updating	180:1,4,9,13	80:21 92:11
university 8:4	200:22 201:9	181:5,23,25	126:3 180:18
10:5 237:16	<b>upfront</b> 242:22	182:8,15,20	181:8 185:8
244:2	upside 119:2	183:21 184:13	215:20 222:17
<b>unm</b> 244:23	upsides 118:15	184:21 185:9	235:4 262:17
<b>unmute</b> 5:22,23	118:25 119:6	185:17,20	<b>utah</b> 202:20
5:25 245:22	uranium	186:5,13 187:9	<b>utility</b> 44:10
249:24,25	253:15	188:23 189:9	277:15
unmuting	<b>urge</b> 13:25	189:18 190:9	<b>utilize</b> 145:11
111:1 250:6	170:13 243:1	206:6 213:12	179:2 214:5
unnecessarily	<b>urges</b> 240:2,25	213:14,19,21	utilized 115:4
197:1 198:4	urging 247:5	214:11 216:19	141:8
206:17 216:6	usa 2:20 4:20	226:13,20,24	v
229:11	4:20 15:17	229:3 235:10	v 246:4 247:21
unnecessary	56:4 59:14	236:10 237:1	vacationed
22:12,15	78:21 97:16	252:6,7 260:19	10:7
117:23 205:10	146:19	261:6,17,21	vaccinated
unquote 101:15	<b>use</b> 18:16,19	263:23 265:3	17:9
unrealistic	23:2 32:23	265:12 269:10	vague 66:24
199:10 208:16	44:9 45:21	269:15 277:23	224:16
unreasonable	54:6 72:1,12	281:8 283:4	valuable
264:4	75:10,14 91:11	285:11 286:5	172:25
unrecovered	91:20 94:18,25	<b>used</b> 19:19 51:1	value 39:6,12
23:6,9 117:23	97:5 102:13	114:23 115:6	39:22 44:14,21
unresolved	104:8,9,14,22	141:11,19	98:8 102:25
51:2,2,4	105:1,8 122:15	170:15 176:9	103:6 143:14
untapped	130:11,13,16	180:2 183:10	145:10 150:5
120:1	143:7,11	184:19 189:9	165:23 166:4
unwilling 57:11	145:15,16	189:18 192:10	178:5 185:10
unworkable	153:19 161:1	217:17 221:21	
196:25 198:4	162:5 165:6	238:7 240:18	193:3 222:1,20
199:25 200:1	168:12 173:1		values 86:5
			97:20 151:1

# [values - want]

154:10 variability	vertically 233:22	<b>volumes</b> 48:24 186:5 191:15	<b>walks</b> 228:20 267:10
variability 206:21 216:5 varies 141:24 203:2 variety 41:17 44:23 139:14 181:7 205:23 228:10,22,24 various 28:25 73:15 75:20 79:23 115:17 148:9 181:7 257:22 258:21 286:16 vary 185:21 211:19 221:18 264:24 varying 144:7 vastly 230:21 venting 115:11 verbally 188:16 verifiable 218:5 veritext 288:17 versed 88:11 version 68:23 74:12 82:7 281:14	vestiges 93:1 vetted 24:19 viability 271:21 viable 178:25 182:3 185:6 195:3 216:7 222:1 223:16 225:11 265:6 283:12,20 vice 12:3 136:14 231:16 victor 246:4 video 6:11 288:5 view 36:4 39:12 39:14 44:9 48:20,25 56:25 121:13 183:8 190:13 192:11 194:19 violation 211:25 violations 208:8 212:23 virtual 1:21 253:25 visible 61:22	186:5 191:15 226:25 235:10 volumetric 279:19 280:1 volunteers 244:13 vote 216:17 243:1 249:16 voters 240:1,2 240:25  w  w 7:20 243:12 wait 30:10 32:21 78:8 waiting 83:25 84:1,5 walk 17:19 20:13 21:13,18 182:16 186:23 188:19 190:1 197:7 199:15 202:15 203:8 204:6 205:3 213:8 215:18 216:20 218:13 218:24 222:4 225:7 232:6	267:10  wall 217:16 223:12  wallace 4:7 14:17,24,25 15:9,13,15 17:13 23:14 32:9 35:18 38:2,24 44:7 47:10 60:24 61:1,4,6,13 75:6 77:12,16 77:18,23 78:23 79:2 84:14 86:2 99:8,23 105:18 107:12 108:18,23 109:5 110:16 110:18,20 111:10 114:2 114:10 116:1,8 120:25 121:2,9 134:6,13 135:5 149:16 157:1 251:10,22 252:22  wallace's 78:13 78:15 138:15
		225:7 232:6 247:12 277:5 277:17 <b>walked</b> 119:14 175:10 <b>walking</b> 118:14 277:21	

# [want - welcome]

23:5 28:9 30:9	122:21 133:19	239:25 240:21	168:3,4,17
30:18 32:19	165:5 230:13	248:17 249:18	169:20 196:24
33:7 35:9,13	234:15 236:4	250:25 251:3	201:19 213:4
38:9 41:9	250:11 253:8	252:18 253:12	220:16 225:15
46:22 56:24	254:13	waterways	234:11 238:23
60:19 72:8	wanting 34:13	251:4	282:3
76:18 79:18	<b>wants</b> 35:4	<b>waving</b> 180:23	wealth 252:13
80:7,14 81:4	131:18 251:21	way 7:12 22:7	wealthy 246:14
82:5,20 84:1	waste 20:25	28:25 32:23	weather 188:5
88:9 89:10	21:4 23:10	33:17 35:18	<b>website</b> 26:3,3
90:9 96:13,14	24:21 41:7	55:6 58:20	websites 218:7
97:10 99:12,12	54:23 87:22	67:9,10 71:5	week 5:16
103:25 111:13	102:15 115:10	85:21 95:18	31:21 49:1
112:4,20,22	116:16,21	105:9 107:6	52:22 58:16
113:9 117:18	118:2,4,7,21	125:4 143:22	114:15,18,18
121:10 127:15	119:3,8 120:10	146:7 162:13	123:24 128:19
127:25 131:14	145:2,7,21	183:7 202:12	162:11 256:23
132:18 134:23	146:1 164:10	233:9 234:13	<b>weigh</b> 165:25
143:16 162:2	177:12 178:19	235:11 264:15	165:25
168:20 172:6	178:21,25	ways 48:22	weighs 164:7
172:19 173:21	185:7 190:12	49:12 278:8	<b>welc</b> 26:19 30:6
174:8 175:16	207:15,20	<b>we've</b> 18:20,24	45:12 79:12,13
176:15 179:18	209:15 226:4,9	21:2 23:15	128:17 138:15
186:2 207:12	227:11,14	38:9 40:23	138:21 139:21
226:7 230:4,4	242:13 253:15	43:24 45:5,17	140:11 158:13
237:3 252:23	254:25 283:21	45:24 49:1	161:6 169:22
253:4 254:22	284:9 286:9	52:20 57:5,8	282:9
262:16,22	wasting 11:1	79:14 92:24	welc's 138:11
264:3 272:11	watched	97:22 98:17,19	143:3 144:23
284:11 285:7	154:16	100:16 114:15	145:20 206:16
wanted 26:4,25	watching 191:2	114:18 126:2	214:11,20
27:8 35:17	<b>water</b> 47:2	132:1 139:4	234:16 283:18
40:18 60:17	141:12 180:13	141:19 161:6	welcome 19:9
80:24 94:13	184:11 220:16	162:10 163:2	79:2
109:9 120:18	230:23,25	166:7 167:23	

# [well's - wells]

well's 73:1 85:8	66:12,23 67:15	133:6,12	190:15 193:2,5
85:12 186:4	67:17,25 68:11	137:12,19,20	193:8,14,18,23
188:22	68:13,24 69:16	139:6,10,13	194:4,5,11,24
wellbore 235:6	69:21,22 70:10	140:16,20,23	195:1,3,10,11
wellhead 188:2	70:25 76:18	140:24,25	195:23 196:3,5
wells 7:7 8:23	77:2,5,7 79:21	141:4,5,8,17	196:8,14,15,18
12:24 13:2	79:24 80:4,8	142:14,18	197:2,6,9,9,14
16:22 17:3,5	80:19,20,24	143:7,10,14	197:15,18,20
18:13 20:18	81:3,9,18	144:6,6,9,13,16	197:20,25
21:6,8,25 22:4	83:10,11,14,15	144:18,24,25	198:6,10,23
22:5,12,15	84:15 89:1	145:3,4,5,7,13	199:3,5,12,23
23:1,4,7 24:5	90:16,22 94:3	145:23 147:15	200:10 201:5,8
24:16,23,25	94:13,18 95:21	147:17 148:9	201:23,24
25:23,23 31:19	98:7,15 99:11	148:19 149:13	202:2,3,5,6,9
33:21 34:6,24	99:14 100:7,9	149:22 150:1,6	202:24 204:14
37:12,15,17	100:18,25	150:8,15,20	205:23 206:6
38:13 39:5,13	101:14 102:2,5	151:9 153:1,9	206:22 207:2
39:20 40:1,9	102:7 104:6,10	154:3,6 155:2	212:3,6 213:16
40:14,17,20,21	104:14,15,21	156:3,7 159:1	214:18 215:4,7
41:1,2,5 44:9	105:6,9 106:6	159:19 160:15	215:10 216:7
44:11,13,19,19	106:7,18 107:2	160:17,18	216:13 218:20
45:1,2,25 47:5	107:3 111:21	161:1,9,12,25	219:7,10,17,22
49:20,21 50:1	112:18,19	163:5 164:2,3	220:1,4,6,8,11
50:1,5 52:13	113:3 114:19	164:11,15,24	220:17 221:3,7
52:24 53:4	116:11,15,23	165:20,21	221:25 222:12
56:8,20,21	116:24 117:8,9	166:5 168:12	222:17 223:16
57:4,6,7,9,11	117:11,23	169:22 170:6	224:20 225:3
57:16,16 58:17	118:15,19	177:3 178:6	225:11,12,17
58:21 59:3,5	119:14,20,23	179:1,2,3,6,12	226:19 227:6,9
59:15,15,20,21	121:18 122:8	180:4 182:3,23	227:17 229:13
59:25 60:8,9	122:17 123:17	182:25 184:18	229:13,15,22
60:12,13 61:21	123:17 124:17	184:21 185:6	230:19 231:3,9
62:18,18 63:14	125:16,17,23	185:25,25	231:11,13,23
64:23,25 65:19	128:5,8 129:21	186:8,18 187:3	232:2,6,13,16
65:24 66:2,5	130:6,8 132:21	187:15,17	232:17,23

# [wells - worked]

2000 7 10			110 00 110 17
233:3,5,13	141:15 142:5	windows 223:3	112:22 113:15
234:11 235:8	160:24 232:21	<b>winds</b> 221:9	262:17
236:12 240:5	232:23 251:17	281:21	work 13:25
240:18,19	267:21,22	wiring 226:14	15:22 27:23
241:22,23,24	276:19,21,24	<b>wise</b> 119:4	36:23 37:21
242:1,2,4	west 150:22	wish 5:20	46:7 58:13
248:10,16,20	230:16	witness 15:7	60:22 81:5
249:1 260:3,13	western 2:3	39:1 42:1,8	82:20 87:13,19
263:2 264:2,11	61:11 147:4	46:12 52:6	90:6 92:4
265:6 266:14	255:20	69:3 108:17,19	100:8 101:8
266:16,19,19	westernlaw.org	109:10 114:3	113:18 114:23
266:21 267:3,6	2:5,6,7	134:15,20,25	116:10,14
267:11,11,12	wheels 244:8	135:23 136:2	123:21 124:2
267:13 268:7	244:12	146:21 155:7	128:21 131:2
268:13,14,14	whipple 243:8	160:2 163:8	133:2,25
268:18,20,21	243:9,11,11,15	166:17,24	134:23 141:18
270:5,12 271:3	243:18,19	172:22 174:5,8	160:9 161:3
271:4,5,16,18	245:20	174:16,20	164:24 168:24
271:21 273:10	<b>wholly</b> 183:23	175:20 239:13	176:10 180:12
273:12 274:20	<b>wide</b> 107:5	257:14 273:11	183:5 185:1
275:9 276:1,3	118:19	witnesses 4:6	187:7,17
276:5,8,11,13	widespread	14:16 159:25	206:22 229:4
276:17,22	83:2,6 225:21	169:8 172:4,10	230:18 234:5
277:3,15 278:2	<b>wifi</b> 143:19	173:23 180:20	234:23 244:14
279:3 280:24	wildlife 188:6	201:20 219:18	245:4 250:5
280:24 281:4	249:4	240:24 256:18	259:25 267:22
281:17,18,24	william 1:22	wonderful	270:14 274:5
281:24 283:5	willing 51:25	251:23	281:14 282:3
283:10,11,20	127:5,8 168:24	wonders	282:21
284:20 285:18	willingness	243:23	worked 8:3
285:22	61:15	word 32:4 51:3	141:22 146:11
wendell 1:5	<b>wills</b> 39:4	74:11 214:7	161:6 170:22
went 40:20	<b>window</b> 187:4	239:18	178:23 229:6
81:15,16 85:23	227:18 229:25	<b>words</b> 63:5	230:22 234:22
115:11 141:13	264:1,4	68:7 70:16	236:9 254:15

# [worked - yesterday]

2 (0 22 201 1	• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •	250 24 255 2	<b>55.11.10.05.5</b>
269:22 281:1	<b>write</b> 94:16	259:21 277:2	75:11,13 86:7
working 64:5	written 5:16	279:24 282:15	90:2 97:1
89:1 92:16	35:23 109:23	282:19	101:24 102:8
107:13,13	119:4 147:24	<b>year</b> 10:19,22	115:12 124:7
134:8,25	224:2 239:8	17:5 26:7	127:16 128:1,2
141:24 154:15	wrong 89:2	34:15 36:1	132:1,11,14,22
164:20 165:9	231:13	43:1 57:6 73:5	133:7,13,15,16
173:24 180:12	wrote 75:24	75:8 76:12	136:15,22
232:15 245:13	<b>wtp</b> 56:4	81:10 83:12,19	137:15 138:24
276:23 279:4	X	86:5,8 98:4	140:18,24
282:5	<b>x</b> 4:1 131:8	99:2 100:3	142:3 143:6,11
workover		102:6,9 103:16	143:15 144:8
91:13 101:1	<b>y</b>	124:3,6 125:5	144:17,20,21
workovers	<b>y</b> 9:21 11:22	125:7,8,11	147:23 148:3,4
100:19 111:14	131:8 135:24	132:16 133:5,6	148:5 152:16
112:11 124:6	135:24 246:4	133:10 148:5	154:10 160:6
works 5:25	yards 228:20	149:14 151:10	160:16 161:18
24:15 55:10	<b>yeah</b> 20:1	152:19 156:20	164:12,12,16
102:8 244:16	28:15 30:4,11	175:9 178:16	164:17,21,21
worried 50:7	30:13 32:21,25	190:21 232:1	164:25 170:23
<b>worry</b> 17:10	42:10 46:6,9	236:7 249:14	178:2 179:3
18:20 140:7	51:15 53:12	252:1,2 257:19	184:2,3,3,10
worse 172:13	57:12 67:1,18	265:2,4,7	189:1 193:15
213:3 253:14	70:8 85:1,1	277:14	214:14 231:24
271:14	95:16 107:10	<b>years</b> 8:1 10:8	232:15 233:4,6
worst 221:9,10	118:11 119:5	24:2,16 25:5	240:16 243:20
273:15,15	122:21 126:11	25:24 35:8,20	243:21 244:6
wozniak 3:4	128:11 132:7	35:22,23 37:8	248:18 257:5,6
167:5	132:25 135:2	43:23 46:4,21	263:12,21
wrapping	141:14 143:16	57:5 63:11	265:8 281:20
129:2	151:24 152:4	64:14,24 65:15	286:8
wrinkle 22:20	159:12 160:14	65:21 66:18,19	<b>yellow</b> 67:17,18
39:1,3	160:23 161:10	66:20,21 71:25	yesterday
wrinkle's 39:12	161:11 210:11	72:4,11,23	19:22 50:8,12
39:14	257:6 259:17	73:5,5 75:3,9	53:23 55:18

### [yesterday - zoom]

109:24 111:12 yield 237:23 young 7:4 youth 10:12

 $\mathbf{Z}$ 

z 131:8 zachary 1:24 zero 91:16 244:23 273:23 zilch 89:18,18 zombie 230:17 230:18 zones 141:17 285:25 zoom 251:1