

**Comment Regarding New Mexico Oil Conservation Commission public hearing to consider proposed amendments to Commission rules at 19.15.2, 19.15.5, 19.15.8, 19.15.9, and 19.15.25 NMAC.**

**Case No. 24683**

4:00 PM, October 21, 2025

Hello New Mexico Oil Conservation Commissioners,

My name is Walter Gerstle. I am a Professor Emeritus of Civil Engineering at the University of New Mexico. These are my personal comments regarding the necessity to adequately clean up the environmental destruction created when extracting oil and gas from deep underground.

It is clear that until now, and currently, the requirements for clean-up from gas and oil extraction is inadequate. When we talk about “sustainability” and “circular economy”, we cannot afford to allow gas wells to be left unplugged and orphaned after they become uneconomical to operate.

On a more general note, the burning of fossil fuels is unacceptably damaging our environment. Drought, excessive heat, wildfires, and flooding have been clearly exacerbated by climate change caused by the burning of fossil fuels since the advent of the industrial revolution. The public pays dearly for these effects of climate change.

New Mexico is in the difficult position of relying, in the short term, upon revenues from oil and gas extraction, while at the same time seeking to limit carbon emissions in an effort to save the environment. These goals are in conflict.

One small step that we can take is to at least make sure that the companies that profit from oil and gas extraction clean up their operations once their wells stop producing. The proposed rules must ensure that all oil and gas wells are plugged at no cost to the state of New Mexico.

Peoples’ health has been shown to be negatively affected by proximity to oil and gas wells.

Please set the strongest possible rules for plugging of oil and gas wells.

We should strive to leave the state of New Mexico better than we found it.

Thank you!