

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to support the requirement of closed loop systems in New Mexico to prevent contamination of our water and the potential release of toxic, carcinogenic, and/or hazardous materials into the environment from pits used during the drilling of oil and gas wells. It is irresponsible for an industry to expect to continue to bury its drilling waste on the sites where wells are drilled. These burials are not monitored providing the potential for future contamination of water, and furthermore, there are instances where buried pit liners are dug up and, in the process, ripped up when later work is done at wells.

The contents of these buried liners are then exposed to become part of rain or snow run-off and/or to become airborne. Industry representatives constantly reassure us of the benign nature of pit contents, but the evidence says otherwise.

Benign pit materials would not cause cattle to die or abort as ranchers in northwest New Mexico have experienced. The process of fracing involves substances that are reported to be toxic, but industry continues to refuse to reveal the nature of materials used claiming proprietary immunity. Yet we are asked to believe the contents of drilling pits are benign.

Unlined pits should be banned altogether. Onsite burial of oil and gas waste should be banned unless there is no material present at a level that makes it toxic or hazardous. These levels should be verified through independent sampling and testing site by site. Thousands of these small waste dumps already lie scattered throughout drilling areas in our state with the assurance of many more such dumps if a new rule is not enacted to govern the wastes from the many new wells still to be drilled. Think of all the buried waste dumps in an area with one well per every 160 acres for Fruitland Coal and in some cases fewer acres depending upon the formation. Think the multitude of dumps should downspacing occur. What is hidden now can and likely will surface sometime in the future? Is this a legacy we can justify leaving future generations?

What other industry is allowed to bury its waste onsite? Why should oil and gas be exempt from properly disposing of their waste?

There are reports that actually show economic benefits from using closed loop systems in part because fluids are used more efficiently. It is time to do better for our air and water, our people and our wildlife by using more advanced technology to dispose of oil/gas drilling wastes.

Sincerely,

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