



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **HECHO and New Mexico State Land Office Host Virtual Panel: Climate Solutions in Action**

Intersection of Clean Energy and the Climate Crisis Focus of Panel With Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard, Representative Abbas Akhil, Pattern Energy VP, and RETA Ex. Director

**SANTA FE, NM** – Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting, and the Outdoors (HECHO), in partnership with the New Mexico State Land Office (NMSLO), and Commissioner of Public Lands Stephanie Garcia Richard, hosted a virtual event focusing on clean energy in New Mexico to build knowledge on the intersection between public lands management and the climate crisis.

In addition to Commissioner Garcia Richard, panelists included State Representative Abbas Akhil, Vice President of Investor Relations, Government Relations and Corporate Communications for Pattern Energy, Sarah Webster, and New Mexico Renewable Energy Transmission Authority Executive Director, Fernando Martinez.

Conversations that focus on clean energy are increasingly important as it becomes clear that public lands will play a major part in the nation's solution to greenhouse gas emissions. In 2019, New Mexico passed the Energy Transition Act, which set the state on course to be 100% carbon neutral by 2045.

“Half of the current generation of energy on public land comes from coal, and only 5% from renewable energy,” **Commissioner Garcia Richard said.** “It is time that we

flip flop those numbers. It is time that we take bold steps to ensure that we are generating more clean energy on public land.”

The virtual event was HECHO’s first of a four part series titled Climate Solutions in Action that will explore public lands as a solution for the climate crisis.

“This series is sparked by a 2018 study which showed that emissions from public lands account for nearly a quarter of the total U.S. carbon dioxide emissions in the United States,” **HECHO Executive Director Camilla Simon said.** “HECHO sees this as an opportunity because we have the power to manage our lands in a more responsible manner. Each and every one of us is a part owner of our public lands which means that on one side of the coin we all have the right to enjoy and access these lands, but on the other side of the coin we all have a responsibility to protect them for future generations.”

The State Land Office plays a central role in New Mexico’s clean energy future, creating jobs, funding for public schools, hospitals, and colleges. Since being elected, Commissioner Garcia Richard has prioritized renewable energy projects as a way to diversify revenue streams on state trust land.

“We can ease the burden on New Mexico tax payers by using state trust land strategically and sustainably,” **Commissioner Garcia Richard added.** “In the last 19 months I have signed leases for four large wind farms, and these are long term, sustainable projects that will have a huge impact on our state, bringing in new revenue to the tune of \$80 million.”

During the panel, Pattern Energy VP Sarah Webster pointed to the Grady Wind facility in Texico, New Mexico as an example of the impact that wind energy projects can have on communities in the state and around the country.

“What we are doing in New Mexico is helping terraform the economy of the state away from the old energy economy and towards the new,” **Webster said.** “The Grady project alone was \$1.2 billion of investment from Pattern into the state. The benefits that will be created from that investment over 30 years is a total of over \$1.6 billion of benefits to the state, supplemental to Pattern’s initial investment.”

State Representative Abbas Akhil joined the panel to inform panelists and participants of upcoming legislation that would support New Mexico’s clean energy efforts, while also focusing on his energy background and his legacy as an outgoing State Representative.

“My background in energy has given me a unique perspective into what works, and what doesn’t work,” **Representative Akhil said.** “We are finally increasing our political and monetary investment into the clean energy that works. We have excellent wind and solar resources. Combining those resources with our Legislative commitment, New Mexico can truly become a clean energy leader.”

Energy is particularly relevant to the climate crisis conversation as areas in the Southwest find a growing demand for water, water delivery systems, and air conditioning. Energy consumption and reliance presents a complex challenge as solutions for the imminent climate crises become necessary.

RETA Executive Director Fernando Martinez rounded out the panel by emphasizing the importance of a key component to the future of clean energy in New Mexico – transmission.

“Reliable electricity is extremely important, we can’t compete with other states or other countries without having reliable electricity, not only from an environmental standpoint, but from an economic standpoint,” **Martinez said.** “We are blessed to have leadership in New Mexico looking at wind and solar, as well as the importance of having an efficient grid and transmission capacity, to make us not only economically viable, but to make us a leader in world class clean energy.”

The event encouraged community members to get involved by supporting local climate plans, as well as speaking out on climate change impacts seen in the community.

More information about HECHO’s Climate Solutions in Action series can be found [here](#).

[View: Climate Solutions in Action with HECHO, New Mexico State Land Office](#)

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#### About HECHO

***Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting, and the Outdoors (HECHO) was created to help fulfill our duty to conserve and protect our public lands for future generations. We provide a platform for Hispanics/Latinos to contribute knowledge and perspectives about public land conservation. From southwestern deserts to northern forestland, Hispanics/Latinos throughout America have a strong connection to our nation's diverse landscapes. HECHO works with local Hispanic leaders to empower and support them in the conservation of our public lands, uniting communities in the protection of healthy watersheds, clean air, and robust wildlife habitats.***

#### About the New Mexico State Land Office

***Under the leadership of Commissioner of Public Lands Stephanie Garcia Richard, the New Mexico State Land Office has seen back-to-back years of revenue over \$1 billion. Over 13 million acres of state trust land are leased for a variety of uses, including ranching and farming, renewable energy, business development, mineral development, and outdoor recreation. The money earned from leasing activity supports 22 beneficiaries – New Mexico public schools, seven universities and colleges, the School for the Deaf, the School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, three hospital, water and land conservation projects, and public building construction and repair.***