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Contacts:

*Julia Bernal, Pueblo Action Alliance, 505-220-0051, julia@puebloactionalliance.org
Anni Hanni, NM Climate Justice 505-879-3806, nmclimatejustice@gmail.com
Miya King-Flaherty, Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter, 505-301-0863, miya.king-flaherty@sierraclub.org*

Advocates Deliver Message to Bureau of Land Management to Cancel the Lease Sale of 10,000 Acres for Oil & Gas: End the Era of Fossil Fuels

Groups Call for Justice for Communities and Climate

Albuquerque, N.M. – Today, advocates delivered a [letter](#) signed by over 200 local and national groups, businesses, unions, and institutions to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Rio Puerco Field office in Albuquerque urging the agency to phase out oil and gas leasing. Tomorrow, the BLM New Mexico State office plans to auction off over 10,000 acres of public lands to the oil and gas industry at the May 25th lease sale.

“People of faith are concerned that the current BLM leasing policy does not care for the Common Good or our communities or the sacred land, water, air and the future,” said Sister Joan Brown, executive director of NM & El Paso Interfaith Power and Light. “The current leasing process and policies reflect a spiritual crisis that focuses upon industry rather than the Common Good and denies climate change realities and respect and care for all of life and how we care for public lands. The mission of BLM as caretaker of public lands requires changes to leasing directions.”

In the letter, groups pointed to recent [findings](#) by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that the window for addressing disastrous climate impacts is rapidly narrowing and that drastic reductions in fossil fuels are required to avert catastrophic warming. Nearly [25%](#) of U.S. climate pollution comes from fossil fuel production on federal public lands, and oil and gas drilling in New Mexico plays a large part in that equation. Federal [data](#) shows that of the 6,430 oil and gas drilling permits that the Biden administration approved in its first two years - outpacing the Trump administration - more than half were in New Mexico’s Permian Basin.

More than 115,000 members of vulnerable, disadvantaged New Mexico communities—including kids under 5 years of age—[live within one mile of an oil and gas well](#). BLM should not be leasing even more public lands for oil and gas, putting people’s health at risk.

“Once again, we find ourselves protesting the BLM’s continued auctioning of public and ancestral lands for harmful fossil fuel extraction,” said Ally Beasley, attorney at the Western Environmental Law Center. “This lease sale highlights the cognitive dissonance and fundamental injustice of continued oil and gas leasing and drilling authorizations in the face of

so many negative impacts. We know—from the health, environmental and climate science; from the knowledge and experience of those in frontline communities—that business-as-usual fracking is incompatible with environmental and climate justice, and that a just transition is imperative. What more will it take?”

In a recent [State of the Air 2023 Report](#), the American Lung Association assigned Bernalillo, Doña Ana, Eddy, Lea and San Juan counties with an [“F” grade for ozone](#) pollution. Lea county has since moved to a “D” grade that was also assigned to Sandoval county. The report also states that the F grades for ozone pollution in Eddy, Lea and San Juan counties are related to oil and gas production and in Bernalillo and Doña Ana, they are likely related emissions from transportation. Unfortunately, Albuquerque’s air quality has gotten worse since last year’s report and was named one of the top 25 worst cities in the nation for ozone pollution.

New Mexicans are concerned about the impacts of [air pollution](#) on their health seeing higher rates of asthma and cancer in areas closer to oil and gas development. The delivery of the letter is part of a week of demonstrations at Bureau of Land Management field offices in [Carlsbad](#), Las Cruces, Albuquerque, and Santa Fe where advocates raised calls to end the federal fossil fuel leasing program, and stop sacrificing New Mexico’s clean air, clean water, and healthy lands to more oil and gas operations.

Since 2016, Indigenous, environmental, and social justice organizations have [delivered millions](#) of public comments challenging Bureau of Land Management lease sales in New Mexico, but the agency continues to lease more lands for oil and gas extraction, putting clean air, clean water, healthy lands, and communities at risk. Advocates urge that the Bureau finally take this resounding public protest to heart, cancel the upcoming oil and gas lease sale and stop leasing public and ancestral lands for extraction.

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