

Stand up for Clean Air and Health in New Mexico!

Speak Out at Environmental Improvement Board Hearing:

September 23, 2020, 4-5 PM

On September 23, 2020, the New Mexico Environmental Improvement Board will hold a virtual hearing to decide whether the New Mexico Environment Department illegally approved air pollution permits for the oil and gas industry.

Starting at 4 PM on September 23 the Board plans to hear public comment. The Board is also likely to hear public comment starting at 9 AM on September 24.

This hearing presents a chance to show up, speak out, and ensure the Environmental Improvement Board upholds the law, protects clean air, and puts health first!

<u>What:</u>	New Mexico Environmental Improvement Board virtual hearing
<u>Where:</u>	Online via WebEx, https://nmed-oit.webex.com/nmed-oit/j.php?MTID=m0e6b152aa25b20dcc497715a2de039d0
<u>When:</u>	Starting at 4 PM, Wed. September 23; also 9 AM Sept. 24
<u>Why:</u>	To ensure New Mexico puts clean air and health first!

More Background

At issue is the New Mexico Environment Department's approval of air permits authorizing oil and gas companies to release more pollution in southeast New Mexico, a region that is currently in violation of federal health limits for ground-level ozone.

[Ground-level ozone is the key ingredient of smog](#) and forms when air pollution from smokestacks, tailpipes, and oil and gas extraction reacts with sunlight. It's a poisonous gas and even at extremely low concentrations is a serious respiratory health risk. Kids, seniors, those with respiratory conditions, and even active adults are most at risk.

As fracking has boomed in southeast New Mexico, [air pollution levels have soared](#), violating federal health limits for ozone.

By law, the New Mexico Environment Department is prohibited from approving air pollution permits that cause or contribute to violations of health standards. In spite of this, the Department has approved hundreds of new permits in southeast New Mexico, fueling the air pollution problem and threatening peoples' health.

WildEarth Guardians appealed to the New Mexico Environmental Improvement Board to overturn a number of these permits. The Board is comprised of citizens who have the power to review and even reject permits issued by the Environment Department.

On September 23, the Environmental Improvement Board will hold a virtual hearing in response to WildEarth Guardians' appeals. The hearing will likely extend into September 24. [The agenda for the hearing can be downloaded here >>](#)

Starting at 4 PM on September 23, the Board will hear public comment. They will provide 5 minutes per person. If you can show up in person to speak out, it will make a huge difference in helping the members of the Board better understand the seriousness of New Mexico's air quality problems and the need to hold the Environment Department accountable.

It is very likely the Board will also hold a public comment session starting at 9 AM on September 24. Join in the virtual meeting with this link, <https://nmed-oit.webex.com/nmed-oit/j.php?MTID=m0e6b152aa25b20dcc497715a2de039d0>.

If you can attend and comment, here are some talking points to guide your engagement and help the Environmental Improvement Board get the message!

- Start out with, "Hello, my name is _____, thank you for the opportunity to comment." [If you represent an organization, be sure to say what organization you represent and share your title if you have one]
- I urge the Environmental Improvement Board to uphold the law and reject the Environment Department's attempts to approve air pollution permits that contribute to violations of ozone health standards.
- It's clear that southeast New Mexico's ozone levels are violating health standards, putting people and communities at risk.
- Ozone is a serious health concern. The Environment Department should not be allowed to worsen the region's ozone problems.
- There is no doubt that pollution from the oil and gas industry is contributing to high ozone in southeast New Mexico. In the midst of the latest fracking boom, emissions have increased substantially in the last several years.
- The Environment Department needs to do the right thing here and stop issuing new pollution permits that are only worsening ozone pollution.
- This isn't about shutting down the oil and gas industry, it's about putting clean air and health first, as required by the law.

If you have a firsthand story or experience with unhealthy air pollution or have health conditions worsened by air pollution, please share that with the Board. Personalize your testimony as much as possible to help it have a greater impact!

For more information contact Jeremy Nichols, WildEarth Guardians, (303) 437-7663, jnichols@wildearthguardians.org.