May 25, 2023

New Mexico Oil Conservation Commission
1220 South St. Francis Dr.
Santa Fe, NM 87505

Re: The Need for Rules to Address the Oil and Gas Industry’s Use of Toxic “Forever Chemicals”

Dear Commissioners:

We, the undersigned, write to you in support of the following application to adopt rules that address the use of toxic perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, otherwise known as PFAS, in the drilling, development, and production of oil and natural gas.

PFAS are a class of chemicals known for their toxicity at extraordinarily low levels, their multiple negative health effects including cancer, and their persistence in the environment, leading to their nickname “forever chemicals.” Using these chemicals is particularly risky in New Mexico where most of the population depends on groundwater for drinking. Oil and gas production, waste disposal operations, and spills can contaminate groundwater with toxic chemicals including PFAS – and, once contaminated, groundwater is especially difficult to clean up.

Although Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham has petitioned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to restrict PFAS use under federal hazardous waste law, oil and gas exploration and production waste is exempt from both federal and state hazardous waste law. The Governor’s petition calls for “uniform” regulation of PFAS, which she describes as “an imminent and substantial endangerment to human health and the environment.” There is an urgent need for the Oil Conservation Commission to ensure that the oil and gas industry is held accountable to the same public health, welfare, and safety standards as other chemical industries.

The proposal before you addresses the very real threat that dangerous chemicals like PFAS pose to New Mexico communities and clean water by both prohibiting the use of PFAS in downhole oil and gas operations and enhancing disclosure rules to ensure compliance and transparency around the chemicals used by industry.

We urge you to grant the rulemaking application submitted by WildEarth Guardians and set a rulemaking hearing. We support the request that a hearing be held in September 2023.

We look forward to further engaging in this process before the Commission. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Nichols
Program Director of Climate & Energy
WildEarth Guardians

Melissa Troutman
Climate and Energy Advocate
WildEarth Guardians
Soni Grant
NM Campaigner
Center for Biological Diversity

Kayley Shoup
Organizer
Citizens Caring For The Future

Sr. Joan Brown
Executive Director
NM Interfaith Power & Light

Emily Wolf
NM Senior Program Coordinator
National Parks Conservation Association

Antoinette Reyes
Permian Organizer
Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter

Mariel Nanasi
Executive Director
New Energy Economy

Jesse Deubel
Executive Director
NM Wildlife Federation

Anni Hanna
Director
NM Climate Justice

Mary Gutierrez
Director
Earth Action, Inc.

Shannon Smith
Executive Director
FracTracker Alliance

Rev. Erica Lea-Simka
Albuquerque Mennonite Church

Barb Gottlieb
Director of Environment & Health
Physicians for Social Responsibility

Ally Beasley
Staff Attorney
Western Environmental Law Center

Miguel Acosta
Co-Director
Earth Care

Robyn Jackson
Executive Director
Diné C.A.R.E.

Rev. Sue Joiner
First Congregational United Church of Christ

James Ludden
Leader
Earth Future, St. James Church

William Clark
President
Rio Arriba Concerned Citizens

Rose Marie Cecchini, MM, Director
Office of Peace, Justice & Creation
Catholic Charities of Gallup Diocese

Linda Popelish
Director
McKinley Citizens' Recycling Council

Anne Porter & Barbara Brandt
Buddhists
Morning Light Sangha

Fr. Anne Tropeano
Founder
Father Anne Ministries
Dr. Kathleen OMalley
Psychotherapist
Office of Dr. OMalley

Martha Camacho Rodriguez
Director
Social Eco Education (SEE)

Rev. Dr. Henry Atkins
Holy Cross Laudato Si Committee

Barbara Doerrer-Peacock
Associate Conference Minister
SW Conference, United Church of Christ

Sally Paez
Staff Attorney
New Mexico Wild

Devin Egber
Community Coordinator
Temple Beth Shalom

Lucas Herndon
Energy Policy Director
ProgressNow NM

Julia Bernal
Executive Director
Pueblo Action Alliance

Charles Goodmacher
Founder
Do Good LLC

Dr. Virginia Necochea
Executive Director
NM Environmental Law Center

Corrine Sanchez
Executive Director
Tewa Women United

Chili Yazzie
Director
Toohnii Binaneestłqáł Altaasłéíí Alliance

Janet MacGillivray
Executive Director
Seeding Sovereignty

Joanie Steinhaus
Gulf Program Director
Turtle Island Restoration Network

Tanya Barlow
Vice President
NM Conference United Women in Faith

Joni Arends
Co-founder & Exec. Director
Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety

Andrew Forkes-Gudmundson
Senior Manager for State Policy
Earthworks

Xavier Barraza
EEJ Coordinator
Los Jardines Institute