

A joined Call for End to Federal Fossil Fuel Leasing Program

Las Cruces, N.M. –Interfaith Power and Light New Mexico-EL Paso, the Holy Cross Retreat Center, Sierra Club and other organizations gathered at the Bureau of Land Management Las Cruces Field Office on Wednesday May 24th to deliver a letter signed by over 200 local and national groups and businesses. The letter urged the agency to cancel its plans to auction off over 10,000 acres of public lands administered by the New Mexico State Office to the oil and gas industry on May 25.

The Las Cruces event is part of a week's worth of letter deliveries to various Bureau of Land Management field offices in Carlsbad, Albuquerque, and Santa Fe. Community members are advocating for an end to new federal fossil fuel leasing, to stop sacrificing New Mexico's clean air, clean water, land and communities to increased oil and gas operations.

The groups in Las Cruces believe that the BLM has a moral and ethical responsibility to care for the Common Good, but the office said they could not meet with them so this could be explained. 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. A 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 number of permits granted by the Trump administration - more than half were in New Mexico's Permian Basin.

"As people of religious tradition in NM and El Paso border region, we are drawn by this moral imperative to care for our Common Home and the dignity of every human being," said Sr. Odile Coirier, Organizer for Interfaith Power and Light NM & El Paso. "We continue to be very concerned about the lived realities that climate change poses in our state and worldwide."

"Many communities are already experiencing death or are being forced to migrate due to severe storms, flooding, and drought," said Antoinette Reyes, Organizer for Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter. "The immigration and refugee crises will only intensify as people living in arid lands or inundating areas can no longer survive That sort of destabilization is leading to increasing violence, human trafficking, food insecurity and growing poverty that already affect us all. This is a human and spiritual crisis that must address at root causes."

Since 2016, Indigenous, environmental, faith, 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. 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.

Interfaith Power and Light