



New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light

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Andrew R. Wheeler
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator Wheeler,

Religious leaders of many faith traditions sign this letter because we live in urgent times and we must speak. Our climate is warming, alarming our youth to take to the streets because adults have failed in their ethical and moral obligation to care for the children, youth, most vulnerable, and Sacred Creation. Adults and children within our communities suffer adverse health effects from methane pollution.

Our sacred writings, scriptures, documents, teachings and those who walked before us command us to care for the sacred trust of Earth and care for those who are most vulnerable. We have signed previous letters, and made comments at hearings and on-line stating that strong methane rules for the oil and gas industry are imperative. We are disheartened and alarmed that the rules vetted through a long public process are being disregarded.

The Abrahamic religious traditions are clear, God entrusted the earth to human beings as a matter of stewardship. We are to tend and serve the land, not to destroy it. Jewish tradition calls for the care of the planet in order to preserve what God creates. Psalm 24:1 notes, *"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof,"* a dramatic assertion of God's ownership of the whole earth. It follows, then, that any act that damages our earth is an offense against the property of God. The Jewish concept of *bal tashchit*, "do not destroy," forbids needless destruction.

Christian theology is rooted in Genesis, which is expanded upon in the Gospel of John, *"Everything came into being through the Word, and without the Word nothing came into being"* (John 1:3). Thus, the Christian teaching is that all is sacred and to be cared for as a sacred trust and responsibility. Muslim religion teaches, *"Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what people's own hands have wrought, so that they may taste something of what they have done; so hopefully they will turn back."* *Qur'an 30:41*. In Buddhism, the Mahayana sutras stress the importance of listening as a way to receive wisdom. Faith leaders ask civic leaders to listen with ethical and moral ears.

The proposed new EPA methane rules completely eliminate regulations for methane emissions in the oil and gas industry, which would remove from the scope of federal oversight all existing oil and gas facilities nationwide. It is immoral to ignore health concerns affecting our communities. It is a sin to intentionally pollute the land, air and water which is a sacred trust. Moreover, to do these actions in

light of climate change, which is increased dramatically by methane emissions, speaks of a deep spiritual illness and disrespect for life.

As faith leaders, we cannot stand silent. If EPA adopts both proposals and entirely rescinds current methane pollution standards, by EPA's own estimates it would result in 730,000 to 830,000 additional tons of methane from new sources through 2025. Not only is this contradictory to the mandate of the EPA to protect citizens and our land, air and water, it contradicts some oil and gas companies who support strong rules to address pollution.

The real cost of the environmental impact caused by oil extraction is left for New Mexicans to live with indefinitely. When the oil is gone, New Mexicans will still be paying the cost of extraction. The boom and bust cycles of the oil and gas industry are a roller coaster ride for those who live here while tourism, and traditional, stable and sustainable economic interests are impossible when pollution exists.

Once again, in yet another comment period we, the undersigned faith leaders in New Mexico ask you to listen to the ethical and moral imperative to care for our communities, health, climate, the future and all who share what Pope Francis calls, "Our Common Home". New Mexico is sacred to people of every faith tradition. We stand united against efforts to degrade and destroy what God (whom we know by many names) has given to us.

Most Reverend John C. Wester, Catholic Archbishop of Santa Fe, NM

Rt. Rev David E Bailey-Bishop Episcopal Church in Navajoland-Farmington, NM

The Right Reverend Michael B Hunn, Bishop The Diocese of the Rio Grande

Rev. Dr. William M. Lyons, Conference Minister, Southwest Conference UCC

Sr. Rose Marie Cecchini, mm, Dir., Life, Peace, Justice & Creation, Catholic Charities, Gallup, NM

Abbot Joel Garner, O.Praem. Santa Maria de la Vid Abbey, Albuquerque, NM

Sr. Joan Brown, osf, Executive Director, New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light, NM

Rev. Anita F. Amstutz, Mountain States Mennonite Conference, Albuquerque, NM

Sr. Marlene Perrotte, rsm, Mercy Sister, Albuquerque, NM

The Rev. Holly Beaumont, D. Min., Organizing Director, Interfaith Worker Justice NM

Rabbi Neil Amswych, Congregation Beth Shalom, Santa Fe, NM

Rev. Pamela Shepherd, Taos UCC, Taos, NM

Rev. Anne Morawski, ELCA Global Mission, Albuquerque NM

Fr. Tom Smith OFM Conv. Holy Cross Retreat Center, Mesilla Park, NM

Nicholas King, Pastor, Carlsbad Mennonite Church, Carlsbad, NM

Rev. Larry Bernard, O.F.M., Pastor, San Diego Mission, Jemez Pueblo, NM

Rev. Dr. Stephen J. Miller, retired Disciples of Christ pastor, Albuquerque, NM

Caroline Marie Browning Hess, Bahá'í Community, Tijeras NM

The Rev. Angela Herrera, Senior Minister, First Unitarian Church, Albuquerque, NM

Fr. Jeremiah C. Griffin, Rector of St. Chad's Episcopal Church, Albuquerque, NM

Rev. Roger Scott Powers, St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, NM

Sister Maria Isabel Galbe Rel. of the Assumption, Chaparral NM

The Rev. Carolyn W. Metzler, Episcopal priest, Albuquerque, NM

Rev. Dr. Bert Scott, United Methodist Minister, Albuquerque, NM
Rev. Alexander Lenzo, Rector, St. Francis Episcopal Church, Rio Rancho, NM
Rev. Dave Rogers, Pastor, First Christian, Disciples of Christ Church, Carlsbad, NM
Ani Jamgyal, Buddhist Monastic, Albuquerque, NM
Idolia Hawkins, Chair, Green Team, NM United Methodist Women, Albuquerque, NM
Rev. Sue Joiner, First Congregational United Church of Christ, Albuquerque, NM
Eileen T. Lundy, Franciscan Co-journer, Austin, TX
RAbbi Nahum Ward-Lev, Scholar-in-Residence, Temple Beth Shalom, Santa Fe, NM
Rev. Judith Marshall, Unity Spiritual Center Albuquerque, Albuquerque, NM
Barbara Gabioud, board chair Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Silver City NM.
Rev. H. Blaine Wimberly, Santa Fe, NM
Rev Dr Dave Wasserman. HR. Presbyterian Church (USA), NM
Rev. Ed Katzenburger, Presbyterian Minister, Albuquerque, NM
The Very Rev. Kristin C. Kopren, Rector, Church of the Holy Cross (Episcopal), Edgewood, NM
Rev. Karen Bash, Retired, Church of the Good Shepherd, UCC, Albuquerque, NM
Rev. Erica Lea-Simka, Pastor, Albuquerque Mennonite Church, Albuquerque, NM
Reverend Andrew Black, First Presbyterian Church of Santa Fe, Santa Fe, NM
Rev. Virginia Bairby, First Presbyterian Church of Taos, NM
Reverend Tiffany Curtis, First Christian Church, Santa Fe, NM
Rabbi Rosenfeld, Congregation Albert, Albuquerque, NM
Sr. Catherine Clemens, D.C., Daughters of Charity Community, Gallup, NM
Rev. Diana L. Loomis, McCurdy Ministries Community Center, Espanola, NM
Rabbi Shefa Gold, Center for Devotional Energy and Ecstatic Practice. Jemez Springs, NM