

Climate Committee Full Report, updated 4/26/2022

All scientific evidence points to climate change due to burning fossil fuels as the force that has placed our planet on the verge of its sixth mass extinction (the last one 65 million years ago wiped out the dinosaurs and many other species). This *will* happen unless we take immediate and drastic action [<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/>]. It is equally clear, however, that power, politics, national interests, and the oil and gas industry stand in the way of sufficiently swift and comprehensive action.

Here in New Mexico we can see these dynamics in full detail. We are the state with the second-highest oil and gas production in the nation and at present are very dependent on the money it generates; 35% of the state's 2021 revenue came from oil and gas. We have the worst methane cloud in the nation over the Four Corners area thanks to a coal-burning power plant, fracking, and leaks from poorly maintained equipment, and another in our southeast corner. We are experiencing severe drought that will only get worse, while we contaminate the water we do have with toxic metals from fracking. We have an Energy Transition Act that lacked teeth when it passed in 2019 and during the past two years political forces have prevented the passage of laws to significantly strengthen it. We are threatened by potential misguided investments in hydrogen fuel production, which uses more energy than it produces. And we have investor-owned utilities that drag their feet on switching to renewables while declining to modernize their transmission systems so they can accept power generated from renewable energy solar and wind installations created by others.

Nationally and internationally, the same forces threaten efforts to take the steps necessary to avert the worst effects of global warming.

We are working to promote practical and effective approaches to reversing climate change and protecting and restoring our air, water, land, and ecosystems at the local, state, and national levels. Two of our current campaigns are resisting hydrogen fuel production and promoting community-controlled power.

WHY IS THE GOVERNOR STILL PUSHING HYDROGEN?

New Mexico's Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham wants hydrogen fuel production in our state. After five failed attempts in the 2022 Legislative session to pass laws and appropriate funds to support a "Blue Hydrogen Hub," she has used an executive order to promote this activity and has joined Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming in a Memorandum of Understanding to apply for a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to develop a Western Inter-State Hydrogen Hub with supporting facilities in each state.

<https://www.governor.state.nm.us/2022/02/24/new-mexico-coalition-of-mountain-west-states-sign-mou-to-develop-a-regional-clean-hydrogen-hub/>

Why does the Governor cling to this still-unproven technology? Clearly, the idea of bringing billions in federal money into the state is appealing. But it would benefit New Mexicans more to make those investments in renewables production and transmission instead. We are being told that a "Blue Hydrogen Hub" will help us "transition" from our current fossil fuel consumption to

the carbon-free future. However, it won't do that! It is the wrong way to get where we need to go. It *promotes rather than reduces* fossil fuel use.

The process of creating hydrogen from fossil fuels:

- Produces MORE carbon emissions than our current fuel use..
- Relies, for “blue hydrogen,” on technologies for carbon capture to eliminate carbon dioxide as a byproduct. But these technologies have failed for the past 10 years, are not available now, and are unlikely to ever work at the scale needed. Further, we don't yet know how to keep any carbon that may be recaptured *permanently* out of the atmosphere.
- Is being pushed by the Hydrogen Council—a creature of the oil and gas industry—as a transition, but really it is just a way for the oil and gas industry to keep selling their product and continue polluting.
- And uses A LOT of water—which we don't have!
- Our own Senator Martin Heinrich also questions the advisability of creating hydrogen from fossil fuels
“.....in the Senate hearing by New Mexico Senator Martin Heinrich (D), who questioned whether carbon-capture technology can reduce emissions from fossil-methane-to-hydrogen plants enough to qualify the hydrogen as low-carbon. He also emphasized the risk that methane leaks from fossil gas wellheads and pipelines could swamp any reductions in carbon dioxide emissions that might be achieved through switching to hydrogen.

IndivisibleSOS Santa Fe sent a letter to legislators during the 2022 session strongly urging rejection of a Hydrogen Hub in New Mexico. Other actions related to hydrogen fuel production ARE needed, however. At present there are NO regulations limiting the amount of polluting gasses that an industry can release into our skies. We need to create a strong regulatory environment immediately, before companies begin developing more polluting industries and we miss the chance to block unlimited release of carbon dioxide and methane.

Learn More

- About the dangers of hydrogen produced from fossil fuels:
 - [Tom Solomon of 350NM.org on blue hydrogen](#)
 - [Sierra Club Rio Grande Chapter, “The Facts about Hydrogen’s Climate Dangers”](#)
- About the beginnings of political resistance from our Senator Martin Heinrich:
<https://www.canarymedia.com/articles/hydrogen/which-states-will-win-out-on-9-5b-in-federal-clean-hydrogen-funding>.

Take Action

- Express your support for renewables and rejection of hydrogen from fossil fuels:
 - [Contact Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham](#)
 - [Contact your New Mexico state representative and senator](#)

- Support organizations promoting renewable energy and resisting hydrogen. 30 organizations, listed below, wrote a letter opposing a Hydrogen Hub. You can see the letter at: [https://westernlaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/NGO_NewMexicoHydrogenPolicyLtr_100521.pdf].

The organizations are:

- 350 New Mexico ☐ Amigos Bravos ☐ Center For Biological Diversity ☐ Center For Civic Policy ☐ Citizens Caring For The Future ☐ Climate Advocates Voces Unidas ☐ Coalition For Clean Affordable Energy ☐ Conservation Voters New Mexico ☐ Diné Citizens Against Ruining Our Environment ☐ Dreams In Action ☐ Health Action New Mexico ☐ Natural Resources Defense Council ☐ Native American Voters Alliance Education Project ☐ New Mexico Environmental Law Center ☐ New Mexico Native Vote ☐ New Mexico Sportsmen ☐ Olé – Organizers In The Land Of Enchantment ☐ New Mexico Voices For Children ☐ Partnership For Responsible Business ☐ Progressnow New Mexico ☐ Rio Grande Indivisible New Mexico ☐ Rocky Mountain Farmers Union ☐ San Juan Citizens Alliance ☐ Santa Fe Green Chamber Of Commerce ☐ Sierra Club – Rio Grande Chapter ☐ Southwest Energy Efficiency Project ☐ Tó Nizhóní Aní ☐ Western Environmental Law Center ☐ Western Leaders Network ☐ Wildearth Guardians
- Although not signers of the letter, New Energy Economy and Retake Our Democracy are other organizations working for renewables and against investment in hydrogen fuel production.

WHY COMMUNITY-CONTROLLED POWER?

Right now, hundreds of millions of dollars a year leave New Mexico because investor-owned utilities (IOUs) make large profits and send them to Wall Street and other shareholders when they could be lowering rates for New Mexico households. New Mexicans pay a lot for electricity! For example, a recent study [<https://renewabletaos.org/energy-policy/new-mexico/kcec/>] of electricity costs for the roughly 37,000 people served by the Kit Carson Electric Cooperative, Inc. (the local IOU) paid that utility about \$12,000,000 *in one year* (\$1 million a month!) for the electricity used in their homes! What if they could keep that money at home to reduce household utility bills and address local needs?

A small but growing group of New Mexico organizations are coming together to re-imagine how we might structure power for our state. By “power” we mean all aspects of energy in our state, including producing it, distributing it where it needs to go, and consuming it. Powerful arguments that favor community-controlled power include its sustainability, affordability, reliability, and investment in New Mexico communities. IndivisibleSOS Santa Fe’s Climate/Environment Committee is part of that effort. We want to consider how we can:

- Significantly lower our household energy bills.
- Achieve maximum use of renewables, getting close to 100%.
- Keep the profits from producing power in New Mexico at home in New Mexico to benefit our communities.
- Bring money into New Mexico from the power we produce, to use for projects that help our own people.

New Mexico has some of the highest capacity for wind and solar power in the US. A 2022 report by Public Power New Mexico [www.publicpowernm.org] estimated the potential benefits of community ownership. It concludes that if we developed renewable energy through solar and wind up to the state's capacity, we could cover all our own energy needs and sell the excess to other states to bring at least \$1 billion *annually* into the state. Think of what that money could do for every community in New Mexico if it stayed here instead of going to Wall Street investors. The report is based on an analysis of growing renewable energy demand in the western United States and a NM Renewable Energy Transmission Authority study identifying solar and wind production and transmission growth capacity in New Mexico. [<https://nmreta.com/nm-reta-transmission-study/>].

Learn More

- **Public Power New Mexico** <https://www.publicpowernm.org/>
- **New Energy Economy**, The Potential for Public Power in New Mexico https://www.publicpowernm.org/files/ugd/3207b0_297237acacb34d26a6019b84e50f5021.pdf

Take Action

- Support organizations exploring the opportunities for community-controlled power in New Mexico <https://www.publicpowernm.org/>
- Find out whether your municipality or county has any interest in community-controlled power or already has some form of it (e.g., City of Santa Fe's Municipal Water Utility). Connect with local politicians and activists to promote community-controlled power.