



State of New Mexico Commissioner of Public Lands

Executive Order No. 2026-002

Prohibition on New Uranium Leasing

WHEREAS, the Commissioner of Public Lands ("Commissioner") has broad constitutional authority and statutory jurisdiction over the direction, control, care and disposition of state trust lands, in accordance with the acts of Congress relating thereto and such regulations as may be provided by law (*see* NM Const., art. XIII, Sec. 2 and NMSA 1978, § 19-1-1); and

WHEREAS, the Commissioner is authorized to withhold state trust lands from leasing when she determines that it is in the best interests of the state land trust to do so (*see* NMSA 1978 §§ 19-8-33 and 19-10-19; 19.2.100.31 NMAC); and

WHEREAS, as the fiduciary of the state land trust, the Commissioner has the responsibility to not only consider potential project earnings but also to weigh the legacy costs related to long-term restoration of the land and the risks associated with long-term financial and environmental liabilities; and

WHEREAS, the Trump Administration is aggressively seeking to promote new domestic uranium production but the federal government and responsible private parties have for over a half century failed to address in any meaningful way the thousands of uranium-contaminated sites in New Mexico related to prior nuclear weapons and energy programs; and

WHEREAS, the cleanup of contaminated uranium mining and processing sites has been hampered by a fragmented regulatory framework, unclear allocation of jurisdiction between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, checkerboard federal, state, tribal and private land ownership, complex litigation and bankruptcies deflecting remediation and reclamation responsibilities, and an overall lack of resources available to meet billions of dollars of outstanding cleanup needs; and

WHEREAS, in 1979 New Mexico suffered one of the largest radioactive environmental disasters in U.S. history at the Church Rock mill site in New Mexico, resulting in about 94 million gallons of radioactive material being released on nearby lands and into the Rio Puerco; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico's history is marked by its role as being the largest producer of uranium ore in the United States (supplying over 35 million tons), which has left a legacy of over 1,100 sites of former uranium mining, milling, and exploratory drilling in the state, of which 250 are considered abandoned because they are not associated with a viable responsible party, and at least 50 of the sites involve state trust lands and have no clear plan of action for restoration, or insufficient funding, to reclaim and remediate them; and

WHEREAS, in 2022 the New Mexico State Legislature charged the Environment Department with coordinating efforts across agencies and developing strategic planning with respect to abandoned uranium cleanup; and

WHEREAS, through collaborative efforts among various state agencies and with the support of state legislative appropriations, in 2026 concrete steps were taken to reclaim smaller abandoned mines on state trust lands, such as the "Schmitt Decline," "Moe No. 4," "Red Bluff No. 1," and "Red Point" mines; however the overall outstanding legacy impact of uranium mining remains fundamentally unaddressed without a clear understanding and plan of action to confront ground and surface water contamination and other health and safety risks; and

WHEREAS, uranium mining in New Mexico has a history of causing irreversible damage to cultural properties, traditional and religious cultural places, and their landscapes; and

WHEREAS, much of the legacy damage and existing and prospective uranium development interest overlap with sacred tribal landscapes, including in close proximity to Mt. Taylor; and

WHEREAS, in 2011 the State Land Office entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Pueblos of Acoma, Laguna and Zuni and the Hopi Tribe that reflects the significance of the Mt. Taylor landscape and the importance of consulting tribal nations in managing lands within this area; and

WHEREAS, the All Pueblo Council of Governors has expressed strong opposition to new uranium projects and called for the protection of Mt. Taylor and other sacred lands; and

WHEREAS, the Trump administration is aggressively seeking to narrow regulations of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act which would adversely impact tribal consultation to fast-track projects with a federal nexus including uranium mining; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Stephanie Garcia Richard, Commissioner of Public Lands, do hereby order and direct that there shall be no new leasing of state trust lands for uranium mining and related purposes; and

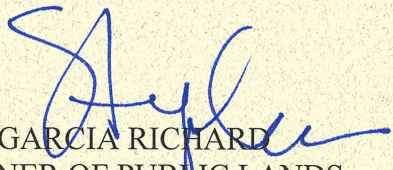
BE IT FURTHER ORDERED that the State Land Office shall collaborate in efforts to meaningfully address the legacy environmental and cultural damage that the

uranium industry has created, and that the agency should focus its limited resources on supporting steps to deal with the legacy of destruction uranium mining and processing has left behind and not making the problem worse through new project authorizations; and

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED that the State Land Office calls on the uranium industry and the federal government to prioritize, fund and meaningfully address the legacy damage the industry has created before advancing new uranium development; and

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED that nothing herein shall restrict the State Land Office from re-issuing existing permits, rights-of-way or business leases related to existing mineral leases with valid existing rights.

SIGNED THIS 4 DAY OF sept 2026.


STEPHANIE GARCIA RICHARD
COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC LANDS

