



Commissioner Garcia Richard Proposes Stronger Financial Protections for State Lands

Apr 8, 2026

SANTA FE, N.M. – New Mexico Land Commissioner Stephanie Garcia Richard announced today the opening of the public comment process and a public hearing on a proposed new rule to strengthen bonding requirements for oil and gas development on state lands.

Currently, oil and gas lessees are required to have a \$10,000 bond on file to cover expenses for plugging abandoned wells and remediating other damage to state lands – a figure that has long been woefully inadequate considering plugging a single abandoned well with no other remediation activities can cost over \$100,000 by conservative estimates.

The proposed rule raises the minimum bond to \$150,000 for oil and gas leases on state lands and makes other changes, including increased coverage for state land deemed to be at heightened risk for environmental damage.

“For too long, New Mexicans have been exposed to unnecessary financial liability because existing bonding levels for oil and gas operations are far too low. That stops now,” **said Commissioner Garcia Richard**. “The changes we are proposing make our bonding rule much stronger and finally bring it into the twenty-first century. Having an adequate bond in place is simply the cost of doing the business on state lands so we can ensure that the public doesn’t have to pick up the tab if a company goes belly up

or isn't willing to clean up properly. Since entering office, I have made a point to hold lessees accountable to ensure that New Mexicans are not left holding the bag for environmental cleanup. Strengthening the oil and gas bonding rule is a critical part of those efforts."

WHAT: Public Hearing on Proposed Oil and Gas Bonding Rule

WHEN: May 27-28 at 9:00 a.m. (and continuing thereafter as necessary)

WHERE: State Land Office, Morgan Hall; 310 Old Santa Fe Trail, Santa Fe, NM 87501

Zoom Option – May 27:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89646464772?
pwd=KGHEwPGImcOhp4xNYILFFnSCz2bHRX.1](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89646464772?pwd=KGHEwPGImcOhp4xNYILFFnSCz2bHRX.1)

Zoom Option – May 28:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88194292301?
pwd=9lGqarl5rPM17ldbbZ8Z6auEbqko85.1](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88194292301?pwd=9lGqarl5rPM17ldbbZ8Z6auEbqko85.1)

Public Comments

Written public comments may be emailed to info@nmslo.gov by 11:59 p.m. MT on May 26, 2026.

In October 2025, the New Mexico State Land Office (NMSLO) released a pre-publication discussion draft to informally receive public input regarding its oil and gas bonding rule. The NMSLO held stakeholder group meetings in Santa Fe on November 6 and 12, 2025, in Hobbs on November 14, 2025, and in Farmington on

November 17, 2025. In developing the proposed rule, the NMSLO considered the comments received on the pre-publication discussion draft during the stakeholder group meetings.

As part of her efforts to ensure state lands are properly cleaned up after use, Commissioner Garcia Richard launched the Accountability & Enforcement program within the State Land Office in 2020. Since then, the program has compelled companies to plug over 840 abandoned oil and gas wells on state lands, saving New Mexicans at least \$84 million in cleanup costs. The program has also filed over 40 lawsuits for non-compliance by lessees.

[More information including the proposed rule is available here.](#)

Commissioner of Public Lands Stephanie Garcia Richard has overseen the New Mexico State Land Office since 2019. In that time the agency has earned about \$14 billion for New Mexico public schools, hospitals, and universities. Over 13 million acres of state trust land are leased for a variety of uses, including ranching and farming, renewable energy, business development, mineral development, and outdoor recreation. The State Land Office has a dual mandate to use state trust land to financially support vital public institutions, while simultaneously working to protect the land for future generations.

The New Mexico State Land Office
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