

Press Statement
Mike Eisenfeld
Release of the 2009 Update to Law and Order in the Oil and Gas Field – 2009
Update
May 21, 2009

Good afternoon, my name is Mike Eisenfeld. I am the New Mexico Energy Coordinator for the San Juan Citizens Alliance. SJCA has over 500 diverse members in the Four Corners region (Utah, Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico) of the southwestern U.S. Many of our members are concerned that rampant energy development is adversely affecting our lives and communities in a region reliant on recreation, tourism and a healthy environment. SJCA works on energy development issues with an emphasis on insuring that environmental protection measures are identified, implemented and complied with. We live within the San Juan Basin, an area of extensive natural gas development with an associated historic legacy of high revenue generation for the federal government. The San Juan Basin has over 35,000 natural gas wells; BLM Farmington Field Office (FFO) has almost 20,000 of those natural gas wells, spider webbed throughout the region.

We were told in 2005 that expedited natural gas development at the BLM FFO would be balanced by an active inspection and enforcement program to protect the multiple use mandate BLM has in overseeing public land. That has not happened. BLM FFO oversees an area that is rich in archaeological resources and recreation opportunities. This area is not only currently being overrun by the natural gas industry and industrialization of our public lands and communities, but the BLM has de facto eschewed its responsibilities in these other programs for which it has equal oversight.

Despite the stated intent to provide a more active inspection and enforcement program, BLM FFO has been pressured to expedite approval of new natural gas sites as the top priority over the past 4 years, with inadequate oversight of existing natural gas wells and associated infrastructure.

Inspection and enforcement is the key to implementation of measures to reduce impacts to public land particularly when expediting natural gas projects but what we find is that expediting ignores the cumulative/aggregate impacts to our land, water, air and citizens. We often hear how mitigation, reclamation, restoration, revegetation will solve our problems later with approval of new natural gas energy development the priority now. There seldom is a "later".

The *Law and Order in the Oil and Gas Fields* report concisely concludes BLM FFO's continued failure to provide sufficient funding, personnel, political fortitude to prioritize the inspection and enforcement program to oversee natural gas development. We conclude that BLM is ignoring its responsibilities for the natural gas inspection and enforcement program in Farmington. The legacy of non-compliance in Farmington is unacceptable and represents a huge threat to public

health and safety through industrialization of our public lands and urban interfaces which is a deterrent to tourism, recreation and public health (all of which we rely on for long term economic security).

Congress and the BLM have a long-term responsibility to the American public to insure that public lands are protected. The expediting of natural gas projects without an adequate inspection and enforcement program in northwest New Mexico has led to industrialization of our public lands that points to a scenario of taxpayers being left in the future to pay the price for reckless development now. We respectfully request that Congress and the BLM take measures to truly balance energy development and environmental protection with an emphasis on public health and safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this very important dialogue.