

Michelle Lujan Grisham, Governor
Sarah Cottrell Propst, Cabinet Secretary
Todd E. Leahy, JD, PhD, Deputy Cabinet Secretary
Adrienne Sandoval, Oil Conservation Division Director

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January 14, 2020

Ground Water Protection Council Analyzes Oil Conservation Division UIC Program

Report shows need for additional staffing resources in Division

Santa Fe, NM – Today the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department's (EMNRD) Oil Conservation Division (OCD) announces a new report highlighting the need for additional resources within the Division. The report, conducted by the Ground Water Protection Council, evaluated the OCD's Underground Injection Control (UIC) program and emphasized the need for additional resources and staff to continue to effectively protect groundwater resources in New Mexico.

In the past five years, UIC permits have skyrocketed from 111 in 2015 to 538 in 2019. At the same time, staffing within the OCD has not increased significantly and investment in technology has lagged. The report states that, despite having a dedicated and knowledgeable staff focused on environmental protection and a new fund dedicated to upgrading technology, the OCD needs additional resources to keep up with demand.

By permitting oil and gas activity in the state the OCD facilitates the collection of severance taxes into the state general fund and royalty payments to the State Land Office. The OCD regulates oil and gas activity in New Mexico by permitting new wells, managing permitting and compliance at other oil and gas-related facilities, enforcing the Division's rules and New Mexico's oil and gas statute, gathering well production data, properly plugging abandoned wells, and ensuring the land is responsibly restored.

The executive budget proposed by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham recognizes the need for additional resources in the OCD and includes a request for additional funding and full-time employees. This lays the groundwork for growing the Division by improving technological systems and contracting with relevant experts to fulfill the OCD's crucial mission of preventing waste, protecting correlative rights, and protecting human health and the environment through inspection and enforcement.

"The OCD has made great strides in the past year to reduce the vacancy rate within the Division and upgrade our technology," said Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department Cabinet Secretary Sarah Cottrell Propst. "While we continue to improve our systems, focus on enforcement, and hire high quality candidates, this report highlights the need to invest in the future of the Division while still accomplishing our mission today."

“This third-party analysis reinforces the need to grow the Oil Conservation Division,” said Oil Conservation Division Director Adrienne Sandoval. “While the oil and gas industry contributes significantly to our state, it is crucial they are operating responsibly and protecting our precious water resources. We hope the executive budget’s call for additional resources will be seriously considered.”

“The GWPC’s review found that although the Oil Conservation Division was clearly understaffed compared to other states, the division was working effectively to protect the environment without impeding oil and natural gas production; which plays a large role in New Mexico’s economy,” said Mike Nickolaus, Special Projects Director at Ground Water Protection Council.

The Ground Water Protection Council is the national association of state groundwater protection and UIC agencies. Since 2016 the GWPC has conducted and published peer reviews of six state Class II UIC programs. The full New Mexico report is available on the [OCD website](#). These program reviews are available on the GWPC website at www.gwpc.org/resources/publications.

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