



For Immediate Release

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New Video Spotlights Health Impacts & Economic Instability of New Mexico's Oil and Gas Industry

Community voices, experts share impacts, offer solutions

[Watch Video at CAVU.org**](https://cavu.org)**

Santa Fe, NM – As the public comment period on draft methane and air pollution rules comes to a close on Wednesday, a new CAVU video released today amplifies stories of human, economic and environmental costs of the oil and gas industry in New Mexico. The video spotlights the state's over-reliance on the industry, its health impacts during the COVID-19 pandemic, and a chronic lack of resources for state agencies in charge of protecting New Mexicans' air, land, water and wildlife.

Stories from ten different individuals are featured in CAVU's update to the acclaimed [UNEARTHED](#) video series, which explores oil and gas issues in New Mexico. "UNEARTHED 2020: From Boom to Bust" features voices direct from the Permian Basin and experts on public health, state budgetary processes and outdoor recreation who demonstrate how our largest economic driver impacts quality of life for New Mexicans.

"We want oil and gas done responsibly. We want it done where they are capping everything that's not going in the air. We want it not so close to people's residences," **Penny Aucoin, Otis, NM resident** shared during her interview. Penny's home and family were showered in hazardous oil and gas wastewater also known as "produced water" in January, a story that has garnered national attention.

"The chronic underfunding of state agencies charged with protecting our health and climate has left impacted people and communities to fend for themselves. At a minimum, the legislature must equip state agencies with the funding they need long-term to tackle the daunting challenges we're facing," says **Jordan Smith, CAVU founder and executive director**. "In the meantime, their stories deserve all our attention. We hope legislators and decision-makers statewide will visit UnearthedNM.org to hear from Penny, Dee and others across the state."

The data is clear – New Mexicans suffer diminished health due to widespread air pollution from the oil and gas industry and regulatory agency budgets have not kept up with demand.

- Air pollution measured by levels of ozone in New Mexico's Permian and Four Corners area are some of the worst counties in the U.S. as reported by the [American Lung Association](#). These counties have received failing grades as a direct result of oil and gas pollution. People who live in close proximity to such development suffer a higher rate of health issues than people who do not.
- Recent research revealed that the Permian Basin is the [nation's highest methane-emitting oil and gas basin](#), with emissions estimated to be three times higher than reported by the Environmental Protection Agency.
- Due to chronic under-funding of state agencies, there are only [seven inspectors](#) to monitor more than 7,700 sources of air pollution across the state.
- The state agencies in charge of protecting public health and regulating the oil and gas industry – Environment and Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources – were [cut by 25-30% under the](#)

[Martinez administration](#). Over the same time, oil and gas production in New Mexico increased by 248%.

- Before 2019, the Oil Conservation Division (OCD) only issued [three fines over 11 years](#) on oil and gas operators as an industry lawsuit had challenged their by statutory right to do so. However, this was corrected by the NM legislature and signed into law by the Governor in 2019. This ability to fine the industry’s “bad actors” will potentially provide additional revenue to the monitoring agencies.

“We can better understand the impacts on people and how to protect their health if we listen to their stories. Stories are compelling, and they are the fabric that connect us. Especially in a time when the world we live in has become so divisive,” says **Liliana Castillo, CAVU deputy director**. “Our 2020 update to UNEARTHED gives voice to the struggles of those like Penny showing what happens when we put profit over the health and safety of our citizens and ignore the long-term effects this industry has on our planet.”

Watch the video and hear more of each story at UnearthedNM.org. Below is a full list of speakers:

- **Denton McCullough**, Carlsbad, NM resident
- **Nick King**, Pastor Carlsbad Mennonite Church
- **Gene Harbaugh**, Pastor Emeritus, Presbyterian Church, Carlsbad, NM resident
- **Penny Aucoin and Dee George**, Otis, NM residents
- **Jim Goodbar**, Former Bureau of Land Management, Carlsbad, NM resident
- **Melanie Stansbury**, NM State Representative, District 28
- **Miguel Escoto**, social justice and environmental organizer in Doña Ana County
- **Andrew Baker**, Health Action NM
- **Axie Navas**, NM Outdoor Rec Division Director

Interviews, images and access to download or embed the video are available upon request. Please reach out to Deputy Director Liliana Castillo at 575-219-9619 or liliana@cavu.org.

CAVU is Climate Advocates Voces Unidas, a nonprofit that uses visual storytelling and community engagement to support local solutions to the global climate problem.

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