

Jana Gunnell

Thank you, Commissioners, for your work, your time, and for the opportunity to comment.

My name is Jana Gunnell. I am a medical doctor, and I have a Masters degree in Public Health. I worked for 30 years in Northeast Arizona and Northwest New Mexico with the Indian Health Service, the Navajo Nation Health Division, and for 20 of those years with the New Mexico Department of Health.

I am now retired, and live in Taos.

I'm writing to urge you to adopt strong, enforceable rules for Senate Bill 21 to fully protect New Mexico's waters.

Safe, reliable water is a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of public health. Our state is dry, and getting drier. Access to clean water is already seriously limited in many communities across New Mexico--certainly in many tribal communities. This is often the legacy of unrestricted dumping of agricultural and industrial chemicals, and of radioactive waste. For decades polluters were unregulated and unaccountable. Some have gone bankrupt, many have simply walked away--leaving communities with contaminated water and soil, and with the resulting devastating health impacts.

We must not ignore or deny this reality.

We must face it, and act on it.

Senate Bill 21 establishes a state surface water permitting program to protect all of our surface waters--but it must have strong, comprehensive, clear and enforceable implementation rules in order to be effective

Industry-proposed rules are not based in demonstrable science, and are not focused on protecting the precious water in our semi-arid state. They are about an easier, cheaper way of dealing with industry wastewater, and maximizing their already massive profits.

It's not just the contamination of our water and our land that's of public health concern. It's the prioritizing of the demands of polluting industry over the health--the lives--of the people of our state, and the health of the environment that sustains us all.

Please remember the cumulative history of extractive industry pollution in New Mexico. Don't compromise the science or minimize the experience of impacted communities.

Adopt strong rules for Senate Bill 21.

Thank you.

Jana Gunnell, MD, MPH

NM Department of Health (retired)