

Michael Stracener

To Whom It May Concern:

I respectfully request that the New Mexico Environment Department deny the Air Quality Construction Permit application for the YGI Microgrid associated with Project Jupiter until the applicant can demonstrate that the project will not adversely affect public health, air quality, environmental justice communities, and regional resources.

While the applicant has stated that the proposed fuel-cell technology is cleaner than conventional gas-fired turbines, the permit record does not adequately demonstrate that the project's emissions, when considered at the proposed scale of operation, will not create significant adverse impacts. The relevant question is not whether fuel cells are cleaner than turbines, but whether the facility itself can operate without causing unacceptable environmental and public-health consequences.

My concerns include the following:

Inadequate Analysis of Total Emissions

The project is expected to consume substantial quantities of natural gas to generate power. Even if fuel cells produce lower emissions per unit of electricity than traditional combustion technologies, the overall scale of the project may result in significant annual emissions of nitrogen oxides (NOx), carbon monoxide (CO), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), greenhouse gases, and hazardous air pollutants. The permit record should clearly demonstrate that these emissions will not adversely affect nearby communities.

Insufficient Evaluation of Cumulative Impacts

The proposed facility would be located in a region already affected by industrial development, transportation emissions, and existing energy infrastructure. The permit review should evaluate cumulative impacts rather than considering this project in isolation. Residents deserve a full assessment of how emissions from this project will combine with existing pollution sources in the area.

Environmental Justice Concerns

Communities in southern Doña Ana County have historically borne disproportionate environmental burdens. Approval of another major industrial facility without a comprehensive assessment of cumulative environmental and health impacts would be inconsistent with principles of environmental justice and meaningful public participation.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Although fuel cells may be more efficient than turbines, the project remains dependent on natural gas. The permit record should fully disclose expected annual greenhouse gas emissions and evaluate the project's contribution to climate-related impacts. The public deserves transparency regarding the long-term environmental consequences of a facility of this magnitude.

Air Dispersion Modeling and Public Health

The applicant should be required to provide comprehensive and independently reviewed air-dispersion modeling demonstrating that emissions will not adversely affect nearby residences, schools, businesses, or sensitive populations. Any uncertainty regarding compliance with air-quality standards should be resolved before permit approval.

Major Source Determination

The permitting agency should carefully evaluate whether all components of the project—including fuel processing equipment, backup power systems, emergency generators, and related infrastructure—must be treated as a single source for purposes of Clean Air Act review. Failure to properly aggregate emissions could underestimate the project's true environmental impact.

Given these unresolved concerns, I respectfully request that the New Mexico Environment Department deny the Air Quality Construction Permit application. At a minimum, the Department should require additional environmental review, expanded emissions analysis, independent modeling, and meaningful opportunities for public participation before considering any permit approval.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and for your commitment to protecting the health, safety, and environmental quality of New Mexico communities.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Michael Stracener LCSW, DrPH