

**STATE OF NEW MEXICO
BEFORE THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT BOARD**

**IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION FOR)
HEARING TO ADOPT NEW REGULATIONS)
AND TO AMEND VARIOUS SECTIONS OF)
20.2.1, 20.2.2, 20.2.70, and 20.2.72 NMAC,)
STATEWIDE CAP ON GREENHOUSE GAS)
EMISSIONS)
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No. EIB 08-19(R)

**ENTRY OF APPEARANCE OF
NEW MEXICO PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

COMES NOW New Mexico Physicians for Social Responsibility (“NMPSR”), and pursuant to Rule 20.1.1.303 hereby enters its appearance in this proceeding. In support thereof NMPSR states the following:

1. The New Mexico chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility was revitalized in 2006 to develop innovative and bold solutions to global warming. NMPSR believes that we have a responsibility to protect the health and wellbeing of our children and of future generations, and that health care professionals should take leadership role in helping to solve climate disruption.

2. NMPSR supports the Petition and believes it is imperative that New Mexico move quickly to cap emissions of greenhouse gases in a manner commensurate with the best available science, which indicates what is needed to avoid extreme weather events such as hurricanes, floods, heat waves, and droughts. Such changes in weather patterns will have an enormous impact on human health and human life.

3. Rising temperatures and changes in precipitation cause serious health and ecological impacts and specifically contribute to the spread of infectious diseases like malaria and diarrheal

illnesses; respiratory diseases, like asthma¹; vector-borne diseases like Lyme disease²; and the urban-based mosquito-borne disease, West Nile virus.³ These diseases pose significant risks to humans and wildlife as well as to zoo and domestic animals. Additionally, heat waves have caused the deaths of tens of thousands in the last few years.⁴

4. The World Health Organization estimated that climate disruption contributes to more than 160,000 deaths each year⁵, and this figure is likely conservative given the intensity of recent storms and events.

5. Perhaps the most worrisome public health threat posed by global warming is the potential for losing our food supplies. A report commissioned by the Pentagon in 2003 calculated that extreme weather events could lead to major disruptions in food and water supplies and have profound effects upon the health and well-being of our society.⁶ The authors of the report concluded that the risks from global warming “should be elevated beyond a scientific debate to a U.S. national security concern.”

¹ Direct health care costs for asthma in the US total more than US \$11.5 billion annually (2004 dollars). Asthma causes approximately 24.5 million missed work days for adults annually. Reduced productivity due to death from asthma represents the largest single indirect cost related to asthma, approaching US \$1.7 billion annually. American Lung Association, 2005.

² Based on an annual mean incidence of 4.73 cases of Lyme disease per 100,000 population, a later decision analysis model (Maes et al. 1998) yielded an expected national expenditure of US \$2.5 billion (1996 dollars) over five years for therapeutic interventions to prevent 55,626 cases of advanced arthritis, neurological and cardiac disease. These figures may underestimate the true costs of the long-term disabilities incurred. *Climate Change Futures*, Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School, 2005.

³ The costs for treatment and containment of WNV disease in 1999, alone, were estimated to be US \$500 million (Newcomb 2003). Subsequent health costs, screening of blood, community surveillance, monitoring and interventions have continued to affect life and health insurance figures, and the costs for cities and states to maintain surveillance and mosquito control for this urban-based mosquito-borne disease have been substantial. The economic consequences of large epizootics (epidemics in animals) involving horses, birds and 300 other animals could involve direct losses in terms of tourism and indirect losses via changes in the balances of functional groups that help to keep pests and pathogens in check. *Climate Change Futures*, 2005.

⁴ The numbers of people who are dying of heat-related causes in the 44 largest US cities continue to rise rapidly. The economic losses of excess deaths include life insurance payments for heat wave and wildfire deaths, property damage and direct health costs, including hospital stays, clinic treatments and ambulance rides. *Climate Change Futures*, 2005.

⁵ Professor Andy Haines, Dean of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 2003.

⁶ Schwartz and Randall, 2003.

6. Scientists believe that in New Mexico, climate change will lead to more heat, less snow, less water from melting snow, and more drought—jeopardizing the quality of life for our children and their children.

7. In the coming few years many cities like Albuquerque and Santa Fe will rely on snowpack as a major source of water. Some studies have predicted that surface water from snowmelt may decline by four percent by mid-century.

Mean annual temperatures in New Mexico have increased 0.6 degrees Fahrenheit per decade, with an overall change of 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit since 1976. Over 95% of New Mexico has experienced mean temperature increases; warming has been greatest in the southwestern, central and northwestern parts of the state, especially in the Jemez Mountains. Most of New Mexico's mid- to high-elevation forests and woodlands have experienced consistently warmer and drier conditions or greater variability in temperature and precipitation from 1991 to 2005. Three areas may be particularly vulnerable: the southwestern corner of the state (the "bootheel"), the Jemez Mountains and the southern Sangre de Cristo Mountains. (*Implications of Recent Climate Change on Conservation Priorities in New Mexico*, Enquist, Carolyn and Gori, David. May 2008.)

A longer and hotter warm season in New Mexico will likely result in longer periods of extremely low flow and lower minimum flows in late summer. Severe drought coupled with warmer temperatures would adversely affect crop and rangeland production as well as resulting in a significant loss of aquatic habitat. Habitat suitable for coldwater fish (e.g., trout) is expected to shrink, with replacement by warm water fish species. Extinction rates of many endemic species of the Eastern plains are expected to increase and riparian ecosystems are expected to experience losses and decline, with a reduction in species diversity. Across all New Mexico's

habitats, climate change is likely to exacerbate the effects of natural processes such as wildfire, insect outbreaks, flooding and erosion.

8. The message from scientists is clear: we must take action now to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions we produce if we are to avoid runaway climate change. Public health depends on safe drinking water, sufficient food, secure shelter, and healthy social and economic conditions. A changing climate is likely to affect all of these conditions.

9. Guided by the values and expertise of medicine and public health, New Mexico Physicians for Social Responsibility works to protect human life from the gravest threats to health and survival. Greenhouse gasses that cause climate change constitutes a threat to health and survival. If we drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, our climate may reach a new and potentially acceptable equilibrium, affording a modicum of predictability. Doing so, however, requires a more sustainable energy mix that takes into account health and environmental concerns, as well as economic feasibility to power our common future. At this time, it is imperative that New Mexico lead the world and develop a new energy plan. A carbon emissions cap is consistent with the best practices to ameliorate the most severe results of climate change.

10. New Mexico Physicians for Social Responsibility enters its appearance in this proceeding to examine and present comments, evidence and argument concerning this matter.

11. NMPSR should be served with copies of all pleadings and other documents filed in this proceeding by any participant. Service should be provided to:

Rob Bernstein M.D.
President New Mexico Physicians for Social Responsibility
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WHEREFORE, for the foregoing reasons, New Mexico Physicians for Social
Responsibility enters its appearance in this proceeding.

Respectfully submitted,

New Mexico Physicians for Social Responsibility

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Dated: _____