Guidance on Public Comments for COGCC Paonia Listening Session

The Commission has not provided a time limit on oral comments, but the limit is generally 3 minutes, which equates to about 500 words or 1 and ¼ page single spaced.

Please be respectful and thank the commission for coming to the North Fork Valley and for their efforts in implementing SB19-181. Introduce yourself—name, occupation/business/how long you have been in the North Fork. Tell the Commission how you are directly impacted by oil and gas development, how drought and extreme heat have impacted you.

Here are important topics to address with the Commission:

- Frac sand truck traffic along Highway 133, through Somerset, and up into the Muddy Creek area in September and October—the dust, noise, traffic and health & safety impacts you experienced
- The new rules adopted by the Commission in the Mission Change rulemaking last year, which became effective January 15, 2021 are the most protective oil and gas rules Colorado has ever seen. However, the baseline from which they started was low, and gaps remain.
- The North Fork Valley remains an inappropriate place for oil and gas development and the rules need to be strengthened to clearly prevent new development in areas that are, in particular, disproportionately impacted by climate change, at high risk of landslide and geological instability, groundwater and surface water contamination, and have high concentrations of organic agriculture. While the COGCC now has the authority to deny a permit under SB181, no denial criteria has been identified in the rules, and no permit to date has been denied. Ask for denial criteria in the rules tied to climate change and local warming, geological hazards, seismic monitoring, adverse impacts to public health, safety, welfare, the environment and wildlife.
- State bonding on federal lands. The COGCC currently does not bond on federal wells, despite the inadequate level of federal bonding. The State needs to make up the difference to ensure that Colorado citizens and the State do not absorb the financial and environmental costs of operators’ failure to retire their assets.
- Full-cost bonding. Currently the COGCC does not require full-cost bonding on all wells. The COGCC only holds $160 million in financial assurance against an $8 billion exposure. Operators need to provide upfront payment to ensure the ability to plug wells at the end of their life and reclaim land.
- Offsite impacts: The Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Act requires operators to provide financial assurance for compliance with ALL of the obligations of the Act and the rules. In addition, the Act requires operators to avoid and minimize adverse impacts. The COGCC needs to ensure financial assurance for offsite impacts such as landslides, earthquakes, and water contamination.