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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **EMNRD applauds introduction of orphaned well clean-up bills in U.S. House and Senate**

**Santa Fe, NM** – The New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) supports the effort in the United States Congress to pass legislation funding orphan well plugging. Both the House and Senate have now introduced companion bills on this important issue with leadership from New Mexico’s delegation. EMNRD applauds Senator Ben Ray Luján for co-sponsoring the Senate bill with Senator Cramer of North Dakota and Representative Teresa Leger Fernández for sponsoring the House bill. The bills will provide federal funding for oil-producing states to plug and reclaim orphaned wells and associated sites. A fully funded program would ensure EMNRD’s Oil Conservation Division can plug and reclaim many of the orphaned sites in the state and protect the environment, while putting oilfield workers back to work.

“Plugging orphan wells protects the environment and creates local jobs,” said EMNRD Cabinet Secretary Sarah Cottrell Propst. “The legislation will help New Mexico in multiple ways, and I thank Senator Luján and Representative Leger Fernández for their leadership and work on this important issue that will aid our state’s economic recovery and protect our lands and waters.”

When an operator goes bankrupt, their wells may become “orphaned” and the responsibility to plug and reclaim the site may fall to the state. Wells and associated facilities that are left abandoned and not plugged and reclaimed can cause environmental damage by leaking methane or damaging groundwater.

EMNRD welcomes the introduction of the orphaned well clean-up bills and looks forward to working with Senator Luján and Representative Leger Fernández as they advocate for passage.

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*The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department provides resource protection and renewable energy resource development services to the public and other state agencies.*

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