



# NEW MEXICO PUBLIC REGULATION COMMISSION

FROM THE OFFICE OF PRC VICE-CHAIR VALERIE ESPINOZA (DISTRICT 3)

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## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### PRC's Espinoza Pushes For More Discussion On Power Line Easements In Dry Forests

SANTA FE, N.M. — The Public Regulation Commission's (PRC or Commission) wildfire task force met again Sept. 4 to continue discussions on how to address issues related to power line easements in New Mexico's drought-stricken forests.

In a packed hearing room at the PRC, residents of Taos, Pecos and Santa Fe, alongside federal, state and local government officials from agencies like the United States Forest Service (USFS) and the New Mexico Environment Department, talked about creating a formal plan of action to lessen the fire-related dangers of power lines in heavily-forested areas of the state.

Representatives from several local electric cooperatives and Public Service Company of New Mexico also attended.

PRC Vice-Chair Valerie Espinoza (District 3) officiated the meeting with State Rep. Luciano "Lucky" Varela and PRC Commissioner Patrick Lyons (District 2).

Earlier this year, Espinoza organized the task force to address easement issues after multiple forest fires sparked by downed power lines burned thousands of acres in the state, destroying houses and valuable private land.

Since then, heavy monsoon season rains have compounded issues, creating extra ash-laden runoff which has put several important northern watersheds in danger.

The New Mexico Nature Conservancy's Laura McCarthy gave a presentation on watershed issues and damage prevention solutions, which focused on accelerating forest treatments like thinning.

PRC staff members also provided information on possible regulatory solutions, like providing utility incentives for widening the use of biomass materials like dead and damaged wood to create renewable energy.

Rep. Varela and others called for better collaboration between federal and state agencies and suggested legislative action be taken to allow more access for forest management.

"We need to bring local, state and federal forces together to being the process of creating a formal plan of action that can be leveraged at the legislative level to create immediate change in terms of how we are able to manage these precarious easement areas," Espinoza said. "The support for this has been overwhelmingly positive, and I believe we're well on the way to developing lasting benefits for all the parties involved, and most importantly for the constituents who are desperate to make their voices heard."

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