



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

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Governor Bill Richardson and Attorney General Patricia Madrid fight new plan to drill at Otero Mesa

State to file Injunction to stop new drilling

SANTA FE - New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson and Attorney General Patricia Madrid today announced opposition to the federal plan to lease oil and gas tracts at Otero Mesa in July. Attorney General Madrid intends to move for a preliminary injunction to be filed in U.S. District Court requesting the immediate halt to plans to drill at Otero Mesa while the state's lawsuit is pending.

"The Administration's energy priorities are all wrong," Governor Bill Richardson said. "Although westerners support energy development, and provide this Nation with most of its domestic energy, the administration is running roughshod over the locals again. These are places that should be protected for other values such as groundwater, hunting and fishing, and ranching. We will fight this proposal. We are preparing an injunction right now."

Attorney General Madrid said, "We cannot permit oil and gas leasing to go forward and allow the federal government to set in motion steps that will irretrievably lead to the permanent damage of Otero Mesa. We will do all we can to stop the feds from harming Otero Mesa while our lawsuit battle goes on."

Governor Richardson and Attorney General Madrid in April announced that the State of New Mexico filed a federal lawsuit challenging the Bureau of Land Management's decision to allow oil and gas leasing and exploration on 95% of Otero Mesa in southern New Mexico.

The lawsuit is supported by a broad coalition of New Mexicans, including ranchers, hunters, farmers, sportsmen and conservationists.

Governor Richardson had proposed a balanced alternative to the federal government, which was completely ignored. "I proposed protecting about half of Otero Mesa, while allowing careful energy exploration on other portions. Instead the BLM proposed opening 95% of Otero Mesa. They want to drill everything, everywhere. But they won't get away with it without a fight."

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