

Summary: Energy Ethics in New Mexico (NMEPRA 003)

The New Mexico Energy Paradox:

New Mexico sits at the epicenter of the global energy transition, possessing world-class solar, wind, and geothermal resources. However, the state remains economically tethered to an oil and gas industry that funds nearly 40% of its public education budget. This "Golden Handcuff" creates a profound ethical dilemma: the state relies on fossil fuel revenue today to fund the infrastructure needed to move away from it tomorrow.

Ethical Battlegrounds

- **Recognition Justice:** This highlights the need to value the cultural and spiritual significance of land, particularly for Indigenous communities, rather than treating it as "empty space" for industrial export projects like SunZia.
- **Distributive Justice:** This questions why utility shareholders profit from natural resources while advocating for the redistribution of wealth through local community ownership.
- **Procedural Justice:** This emphasizes that a corporation's "moral track record" and character should be considered a material risk factor in managing critical state infrastructure.

Key Dilemmas: "Green Colonialism" vs. Justice

- **The Export Trap:** There is a risk of New Mexico becoming a "resource colony" that exports clean energy to wealthier states (California and Arizona) while retaining all local environmental and land-use burdens.
- **The Revenue Cliff:** Transitioning away from the Permian Basin threatens the social safety net, as oil and gas royalties currently fund programs like tuition-free college.
- **Resource Strain:** High-intensity technologies like "Green Hydrogen" and hydraulic fracturing (fracking) both pose significant threats to limited water resources in a drought-prone state.

Framework for an Ethical Future

- **The Green Amendment:** Enshrining a clean and healthy environment as a fundamental civil right.
- **Community Solar to Publicly Owned Utility:** Use localized solar as a "gateway" to break the utility monopoly and shift to public power.
- **Transparency Laws:** Require "Beneficial Ownership" disclosure to prevent corporations from hiding behind shell LLCs.
- **Cumulative Impact Assessments:** Mandate that regulators evaluate total pollution loads on a community, not just isolated permits.
- **Civic Energy Literacy:** Launch state-led education to help citizens understand the "shadow costs" (water, land, debt) of their energy.

Conclusion:

A "just transition" must recognize that a clean electron is not automatically a just one. Success must be measured by how much sovereignty and wealth are retained on the ground for New Mexicans.