

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to speak before you regarding the Augustine Plains Ranch drilling proposal and for your continued interest.

As a newly elected County Commissioner my job is to protect the public welfare and the health and safety of my constituents. As a County Commissioner I would expect that the Augustine Plains Ranch would be keeping the County Commission updated on this application. Since this well drilling venture started, the Augustine Plains Ranch has held only one town hall meeting in Reserve. There have been no other meetings with the residents of Catron County.

In their new proposal, they state that they will have “stakeholder involvement” which includes major water users in the Middle Rio Grande and “identified” end-users (which have yet to be named), Are the residents of Catron County now no longer considered stakeholders?

The new proposal is also filled with faulty data and vague ideas that engage more questions. The whole recharge and harvesting issue is neither tested nor defined in their proposal. Will the enhanced recharge structures be considered “new points of diversion” which will require another application with the State Engineer?

Are the recharge systems located on the Augustine Plains Ranch? If not, where will they be located?

The Augustine Plains Ranch states that they will request credit for the “enhanced recharge facilities” in an amount to be determined at the hearing. What kind of credit and how much will that cost New Mexico? They previously presented the fact that no public money would be required for this project.

In their proposal they also state that Catron County will be one of the end users. Do they plan on selling us water that we, as senior water users already use?

In addition to that, in their proposal they ask the State Engineer to change their hearing procedure? Can they do that? Are in such a position that they can suggest policy changes to the State Engineer?

Where is the documentation that the project can produce enough renewable energy to pump water from the 37 wells that are 2000 feet deep?

The Augustine Plains Ranch claims to have already invested over 3 million dollars which includes hydrologic studies. This data has not been shared with the public much less the residents of Catron County or our County Commissioners.

The rainfall data of an average of 15 inches a year is an inflated number. Over this past 8 years the average rainfall was 9.1 inches. The average rainfall for 2008 was just 5.9 inches.

The Augustine Plains Ranch has invested time and money in this project to assure their financial success and have left the residents of Catron County out. There has not been an economic impact study to determine just how much this project will affect the economy in Catron and Socorro counties.

In their project overview, they claim that they will replace impaired water yet have not outlined how or at what cost to current water users. As they have stated on 3 separate occasions, three of our family wells will go dry. By their admission, this appropriation will impair our existing rights.

Should this application be approved, the Catron County Commission we will demand that the Augustine Plains Ranch be required to put up a substantial bond prior to any drilling. Not only will the Commission demand this so will our landowners.

And lastly, as a County Commissioner I must also point out that their figures on the population in Datil are incorrect. Per the Postmistress the Datil Post Office services approximately 600 households. Vastly different than the population of 54 people that the Augustin Plains Ranch references in the proposal.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee – thank you for your time.