Public Comment Toolkit

The Bureau of Land Management proposed a new rule to make it even easier for fossil fuel companies to drill on public lands and leave taxpayers to clean up their pollution. This rule would lower the bond amounts required by oil and gas companies that use public lands to drill by more than 90% from $125K per site to $10K per site. These bonds are needed to cover the expense of plugging wells and remediating sites. It also prevents public review of proposed public land sales and leases for oil and gas.

Your voice has an impact: Submit a comment by 11:59pm ET August 24, 2026.

How: Agencies are required to solicit public comments before the policy takes effect. Bureau of Land Management must review every public comment and respond to significant comments.[1] If BLM does not follow these steps, federal courts can **stop** the policy. Commenting is your opportunity to make your voice heard and fight against this dangerous policy that would further the climate crisis and leave taxpayers footing the bill to clean up well sites.

Comments helped fight previous policies and can do so again: For example, Health and Human Services (HHS) proposed reducing certain Medicare reimbursements for health care providers. Commenters pointed out errors with the studies cited by HHS. A court struck down the HHS rule because of the issues pointed out by comments.[2]

What the rule does

- Lowers the bond that oil and gas companies need to pay to ensure site plugging, capping, and remediation by 90% from $125K per site to $10K per site and from $500K for a statewide bond of $25K
- Reduces the 90 day public review period of a proposed sale or lease of public lands to just 10 days

Why it matters

- Bonds paid by oil and gas companies need to cover the expense needed to plug wells and remediate sites. CO estimates that it costs around $90K to plug a well and remediate a site. There are 2 million inactive, unplugged wells in the US which emit 2-5 million cars worth of greenhouse gases per year. Oil and gas companies need to be accountable for their pollution after using public lands, otherwise taxpayers are left with the bill and continued pollution.
- Public lands belong to the public, not private oil and gas companies, and the public should have enough time to review and comment on potential leases or sales of public lands.

[1] See Yale Law Journal for an explanation.
[2] See St. James Hosp. v. Heckler, 760 F.2d 1460, 1470 (7th Cir. 1985).

How to craft your comment:

The best comments are **unique** and contain a mix of the elements listed below.[3] Comments do not have to be long and do not have to address everything to be effective. Comments can be submitted anonymously.

- 📩 **Include required information.** Your comment must include the proposal information: Agency name (BLM), Docket ID (BLM-2025-0037) and RIN (1004-AF05).

- ✍️ **Personalize your comment.** Comments should be **unique** and should not use generic text from comment campaigns. Here are some tips:
    - 🌕 *Introduction*: Explain why you are interested, your credentials and experience.
    - 🌕 *Personal story*: Write a personal narrative of how this will impact you. When possible, refer to the specific parts of the rule related to the impact.
    - 🌕 *Other arguments*: Select a few arguments that you can expand on.
    - 🌕 *Conclusion*: Summarize your arguments and propose alternatives to the policy.

- 👊 **Challenge the policy**. Courts will stop policies if their underlying policy judgments (such as fiscal soundness), reasoning, or factual premises are wrong or misleading. List *problems* with the proposal such as the inadequacy of the proposed bond amounts or the handling of public lands. Ask *questions* about the rationale and provide *examples* of why it's wrong. If you can, include *facts, data, and citations* to bolster your argument (but this is not required).

- 🎯 **Be clear and direct about the impact.** What are the costs and benefits?[4] How will the proposal impact you or your community? Describe the result of the policy.

- ↩️ **Propose alternatives** that can better-accomplish the stated policy goal. This can include maintaining the status quo. Courts will stop policies if the agency has failed to consider an important problem or failed to consider reasonable alternatives.

- ✏️ **Cite the proposed policy:** If your comment refers to specific sections of the proposal, note the section heading and page number if relevant. When referring to regulatory text, note the subpart and section number.

What to avoid:

- **Don't submit generic text from comment campaigns**. Near-duplicate text will be lumped together for review. If you don't have much time to write a comment, take a few minutes to add a personal paragraph to generic text.
- Don't anguish over word choice. These are reviewed quickly. Imperfection is okay.
- Don't give confidential or sensitive information. These comments are made public.
- Don't submit threats, insults, or content that is not related to the policy.

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[3] This guide is tailored for individuals commenting in their personal capacity. These tips have been compiled from numerous sources, including the CRREA Project and Regulations.gov.

[4] For example, speak in terms of burdens, costs, inefficiencies, hardships, waste, and redundancies. Other helpful terms: unnecessary, excessive, unwarranted, suboptimal, ineffective, unproductive, expensive, strain, etc.