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Trump Administration rolls back standard limiting waste of natural gas

Billings, Mont. — In response to a new rule by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management that weakens limits of waste of publicly-owned natural gas by oil and gas operations, the following organizations issued statements.

The new rule replaces the Obama Administration's 2016 methane waste prevention standard requiring the oil and gas industry to monitor wells on public and tribal lands for leaks, repair faulty equipment, reduce noisy and wasteful flaring, and capture natural gas emissions. These emissions include methane, a greenhouse gas with more potential to affect the climate than carbon dioxide.

The U.S. Treasury collects royalties when publicly-owned resources are extracted. When natural gas leaks or is flared, the public often receives no royalty payments to fund schools and other public services. More than [\\$330 million worth of natural gas is wasted](#) annually through leaks, venting and flaring. According to a BLM [fact sheet](#), oil and gas companies operating on public and tribal land between 2009 and 2015 wasted enough gas to serve 6.2 million people for a year.

STATEMENTS

“I see venting, flaring, and leaks of natural gas every day on the Fort Berthold Reservation. The flaring, venting, and leaks damage our air, and also waste our finite natural resources. I can see with my own eyes how much gas is wasted and have experienced health effects from the emissions. I know firsthand that the new rules are not strong enough to protect our health, environment, and lessen the impacts to our climate.

“Our tribal communities are directly impacted by this watered-down rule. It is our people who breathe in the toxins that can be prevented from spilling into our atmosphere. It is also our children, my grandchildren, that are breathing it in. How can this be allowed to continue? We will continue to fight this roll back”

- ***Lisa DeVille, Chair of Fort Berthold Protectors of Water and Earth Rights and Board Member of the Dakota Resource Council, Mandaree, N.D.***

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“Secretary Zinke is rolling back a rule that required greater capture of natural gas and that the industry pay a royalty on gas that is vented to the atmosphere or otherwise wasted. Requiring royalty payment on wasted gas is one important reason why the 2016 rule is needed, but there are others. As the increasing scarcity of basic resources like clean water and old forests reminds us, we need to use our finite resources wisely and not waste them.”

- ***Rodger Steen, Western Organization of Resource Councils’ Oil and Gas Campaign Team Chair, from Steamboat Springs, Colo.***

“Western Colorado Alliance is both disappointed by Zinke’s decision to repeal the 2016 BLM Methane Waste Rule. This decision will increase the pollution in our air, waste a publicly-owned resource and harm taxpayers. Americans are going to pay a high price for the Secretary’s failure to listen to overwhelming support of the rule from thousands of stakeholders, citizens and elected officials, including Congress. The 2016 BLM Methane Rule has helped to cut waste, leakage, and helped preserve a valuable resource. Additionally, since the rule implementation there have been fewer accidents, and reduced levels of harmful pollution. This decision to repeal the 2016 BLM Methane Waste Rule will cause our families to suffer negative health effects from polluted air, will result in reduced funding for community needs, and shows a blatant disregard for the effects of climate change.”

- ***Steve Allerton, President of Western Colorado Alliance, from Grand Junction, Colo.***

“Once again, the Trump administration’s actions today threaten our health and our communities. I grew up on a farm that had oil and gas drilling on it. I’ve seen up close what happens when the industry isn’t held accountable for its pollution. Letting methane pollution continue unaddressed is a reckless political ploy that hurts the American people.

“The 2016 rule was a practical step forward that would have made real-world cuts in air pollution. The BLM’s reversal is a cynical step that will end up harming most Americans.”

- ***Sue Beug, Member of the Northern Plains Resource Council and small business owner in Carbon County, Mont.***

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