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## **PRESS RELEASE**

# **Environmental Protection Agency Proposes Unwanted Deregulation of Oil and Gas Industry**

2016 Oil and Gas Air Pollution Rules would be dismantled, despite industry and community  
opposition

**Billings, MT** – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released plans today to remove rules that control leaks of natural gas from oil and gas sites, despite opposition from community groups such as the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) and Dakota Resource Council (DRC), health advocates, and the very companies regulated by the Obama-era rules. The rollbacks will promote the waste of a valuable resource, increase emissions of dangerous volatile organic compounds, and put our nation’s foot down on the climate emission accelerator, opponents say.

"EPA Administrator Wheeler's announcement today marks the final evisceration of methane pollution rules which protect those of us in oil and gas country from direct exposure, and protect the rest of the globe from increasing greenhouse gas emissions which fuel further climate disruptions," said Barbara Vasquez, a retired health researcher and Chair of WORC’s Oil and Gas Team, in Greeley, Colorado.

“This unconscionable action leaves behind a broken patchwork of weak state rules; needlessly wastes thousands of tons of valuable resources; cuts local, state, and federal royalty revenues; and gives the green light for companies to leak toxic compounds into the air we breath,” Vasquez said. “Speaking for those of us who are impacted daily by oil and gas production, it’s not often that we stand with BP, Shell, and Exxon. Today we are all asking that rather than rolling back common-sense and economical protections, the Administrator should listen to the numerous major Oil and Gas companies which have asked for direct federal regulation of methane pollution.”

The rules were designed to address and minimize leaking of methane, a potent greenhouse gas, from new and modified oil and gas wells and associated infrastructure such as compressor stations and transport lines. In 2015, the oil and gas sector wasted an estimated 13 million metric tons of methane due to leaks. Methane from the oil and gas industry comes packaged with other pollutants: volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which are a key ingredient in ground-level ozone (smog); and a number of pollutants known as “air toxics” – in particular, benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylene.

“Over the past ten years, I’ve watched oil and gas turn our reservation into an industrial zone. It’s totally changed our way of life,” said Lisa DeVille, member of DRC and Fort Berthold Protectors of Water and

Earth Rights, from Mandaree, North Dakota. “Fort Berthold, North Dakota, and America need the EPA’s rules to protect us from methane and other harmful air pollution resulting from oil and gas activities,”

“Residents of the Fort Berthold Reservation and across North Dakota are already paying the price for oil and gas leaking and venting, and they will continue to do so if we get rid of our vital pollution safeguards,” Deville said. “Oil and gas industry pollution is dangerous; we know if the federal pollution standards repealed, millions across the country will face the same unfair health challenges already impacting Native Americans in the region.”

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*The Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) is a network of grassroots organizations that span seven Western states with more than 15,000 members. Many WORC members live on lands overlying and neighboring federal, tribal, state and privately owned oil and gas deposits, and experience impacts of federal oil and gas production. Headquartered in Billings, Montana, WORC also has offices in Colorado and Washington, D.C.*