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Fact sheet: BLM Methane Rule Much-Needed Update

BLM rule to cut methane waste by 40 to 45 percent will boost natural gas supplies, enhance America's energy security and economy, ensure that taxpayers receive royalties, and improve public health.

Jobs and money are needlessly going up in flames. While the energy sector is booming, oil and gas companies are losing profits and missing job-creating opportunities by treating methane as a waste product. Methane venting/flaring not only wastes a valuable resource, it also adds an extremely harmful pollutant/greenhouse gas to the air we breathe.

Domestic oil production is at a [30-year high](#), and the [world's largest natural gas producer](#) bringing a plentiful source of fuel that heats our homes and businesses. While natural gas production provides important energy and economic benefits, methane emissions from gas production contributes to climate change by depleting the ozone layer at a rate [20 times faster](#) than carbon dioxide causing significant [health concerns](#). Annual methane emissions on federal lands in 2012 equaled the annual emissions from 42 million cars. This waste **short-changes taxpayers who lose** as much as \$23 million in annual federal [royalty payments](#). A reduction in methane emissions would **benefit oil and gas producers**; the EPA says 40% of the gas lost could be captured and sold with [currently available](#) technologies.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) [plans to update](#) decades-old standards to reduce waste from oil and gas wells. Reducing methane emissions is a powerful way to support local economies with an abundant source of energy that generates revenue and improves public health and safety.

Methane from fossil-fuel production is primarily emitted through:

- The combustion of extracted fossil-fuels
- Industry practices of venting, flaring, or releasing excess gas, and
- “Fugitive emissions,” which includes leakage from oil/gas transportation, storage, and distribution



Usable natural gas that is currently wasted through venting and flaring—due to inadequate infrastructure—can and should be captured for future use

- A [2010 report](#) from the Government Accountability Office found that 5% of all federal onshore natural gas produced in the US is wasted through venting and flaring.
- The GAO reported that federal agencies are also likely underestimating the actual amount of vented and flared gas by a magnitude of 30 times or more.
- The GAO report stated that 40% of this gas could be “economically captured with currently available control technologies.”
- If this waste continues taxpayers could conservatively lose almost \$800 million over the next decade due to the venting and flaring of natural gas from public lands.

A strong BLM methane waste rule can cut methane waste from oil and gas operations by 40 to 45 percent and curb methane emissions by:

- Requiring comprehensive and frequent leak detection and repair
- Requiring the use of best practices and technology to reduce waste (through royalty incentives)
- Creating a broad prohibition against flaring
- Cutting and phasing out the practice of flaring



An updated BLM methane rule is a sound economic and public health strategy because reducing methane emissions means capturing valuable fuel that is otherwise wasted and reducing other harmful pollutants—a win for both public health and the economy.

