

January 19th, 2022

Michael Regan
Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

RE: The EPA's New Methane Rule A Good Step, But Must Go Farther to Protect The Public Land Communities

Administrator Regan,

With the growth in remote work and skyrocketing demand for outdoor access, healthy public lands are bringing both visitors and business investment to rural communities across the country. But this important economic driver is threatened when methane from oil and gas development is not properly managed. For this reason, our businesses support a strong EPA Methane Rule that protects our nation's environment and supports outdoor recreation on shared public lands.

Many rural economies near public lands have a great opportunity to pivot their economies beyond resource extraction – if their skies are clear and their air is clean, they can use their public lands to attract both visitors and business investment. We need a strong methane rule to reduce air and climate pollution to give these communities a future and ensure that all Americans will continue to enjoy hiking, biking, swimming, climbing, skiing, and rafting on our federal and native lands.

Sadly, in the U.S alone, the oil and gas industry releases [16 million metric tons of methane](#) each year, with the same near-term climate impact as 350 coal plants. Poor air quality is not only harmful to the health of our communities, it also harms local economies that rely on access to the outdoors.

While the EPA's proposed rule to cut methane and other harmful pollutants from new and existing oil and gas operations are an important step in the right direction, they do not go far enough. The EPA must strengthen this rule to protect communities and confront the climate crisis head-on. EPA's rule must end the wasteful and dangerous practice of routine flaring at oil and gas facilities, like Colorado and New Mexico have done already. And EPA's rule also must require regular monitoring at all smaller, high-polluting and leak-prone wells, while also working to incorporate emission monitoring results generated by community groups and other third parties into its standards.

Simply put, our country's public lands are key economic drivers, and we need to do all we can to safeguard them. This is not something we can put off any longer. We must act now and act quickly. The public broadly supports strong federal methane safeguards. [New polling data](#) shows 71 percent of registered voters want strong federal rules to reduce oil and gas methane pollution including frequent inspections at smaller wells that are often leak-prone.

EPA serves the public, and must put in place comprehensive, loophole-free methane safeguards to protect and support future economic prospects for public land communities across the nation.

The undersigned,

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