

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 24, 2022

**Contact:** Alan Septoff for Earthworks, [aseptoff@earthworksaction.org](mailto:aseptoff@earthworksaction.org), 202-271-2355  
Camilla Feibelman, Sierra Club - Rio Grande Chapter  
[camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org](mailto:camilla.feibelman@sierraclub.org), 505.715.8388

## **NEW ANALYSIS: 144,377 New Mexicans, including 38,749 children, Threatened by Oil and Gas Industry Air Pollution**

*Map Data Shows EPA Must Strengthen Newly Proposed Safeguards to Protect Public Health, Climate, following New Mexico's lead*

Carlsbad, NM - A new geospatial analysis released by Earthworks today shows **144,377 New Mexicans** including **38,749 children**, reside near or attend schools or daycares within a ½ mile threat radius of active oil and gas operations. In the San Juan Basin nearly 80% of the population lives within this radius. In the NM Permian Basin the map shows a nearly 40% increase in \*EDDY County alone of people living within the threat radius since 2017. This analysis comes as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) works to finalize their [widely supported proposed safeguards](#) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and associated toxic air pollution from new and existing oil and gas facilities and as they prepare to introduce a [supplemental rule](#) to address routine flaring and smaller leak-prone wells. New Mexico's recently finalized methane and ozone precursor rules set a strong floor for federal rules that would protect all communities like those in Texas, where regulations are limited, and along its border in New Mexico.

“Looking at this map as a frontline community member makes my stomach drop,” said **Kayley Shoup, Community Organizer with Citizens Caring for the Future based in Carlsbad**. “In Southeast New Mexico many people along with healthcare professionals are unaware of the health risks that are associated with living near an oil & gas site which makes for a harrowing reality on the ground. While the threat map is a great tool for everyday citizens to utilize, it also highlights why leaders at every level must do more to not only protect frontline community members but also to enact a managed decline of production. The number of people living in threat zones has substantially increased in the past five years. This is unacceptable at a time when natural disasters are ravaging our state, and everyday we are learning more about the substantial health risks associated with oil & gas production.”

“This map shows that In San Juan County, more than half of the Native population lives within a half-mile of an oil and gas production site. That’s why we asked the New Mexico Environmental Improvement Board to for strict air pollution regulations for oil and gas facilities, including more robust protections for people who live near oil and gas

wells and we want to see the same from the EPA,” said **Joseph Hernandez, Diné Energy Organizer with NAVAEP.**

“The rash of dots on this map equates to 38,749 of our New Mexico kids living within a half mile of an oil and gas facility in counties that get F grades for air quality. That equates to worse asthma, lost days at school, and lost days of work for parents. With production booming in the Permian and tribal communities at risk in the San Juan Basin, strong enforcement of our state rules is more urgent than ever, and the speedy delivery of even stronger federal rules is essential,” said **Camilla Feibelman, Sierra Club - Rio Grande Chapter Director**

“This map highlights why EPA should build from the strong example of states like New Mexico, where Gov. Lujan Grisham has established comprehensive oil and gas rules,” said **Jon Goldstein, Senior Director of Regulatory and Legislative Affairs, EDF.** “Frontline communities need assurance that smaller wells with leak-prone equipment will be monitored, intentionally-polluting equipment like pneumatic controllers will be phased out, and that the polluting and wasteful practice of routine flaring will be ended.”

In the United States, oil and gas production is the largest industrial methane polluter, a greenhouse gas at least 80 times more powerful than carbon dioxide. Peer-reviewed science shows that toxic pollutants released along with methane from oil and gas facilities puts people at risk for cancer, respiratory illness, fetal defects, blood disorders, and neurological problems —and that risk increases for children and the elderly.

“This map shows 140,377 living, breathing reasons to strengthen EPA’s methane proposal. Pollution prone oil and gas wells shouldn’t be exempt from frequent monitoring, and no company should be able to burn off methane as waste. But no matter how strong these rules are, climate justice during a climate emergency means using every tool in the toolbox including declaring a National Emergency on climate change,” said **Earthworks’ Policy Director Lauren Pagel**

“The Oil & Gas Threat Map is a comprehensive tool allowing for policy makers and the public to better understand who is being impacted by polluting oil and gas operations, and to promote environmental justice using these insights. This map was crafted using the finest resolution available to estimate affected populations and then summarized by county, allowing a better understanding of populations that must live in close proximity to this industry, including information on traditionally marginalized populations such as children and communities of color,” **added FracTracker Manager of Data & Technology Matt Kelso**

The Oil and Gas Threat Map displays information about those living within a half mile of oil and gas facilities in New Mexico and other states. Although scientific literature shows that health impacts are also associated at distances greater than ½ mile, we conservatively use ½ mile because it is the distance at which these impacts have been most clearly correlated. The Oil and Gas Threat Map will also display data about the risk of increased cancer and respiratory health rates at the county level. In addition to the

data that the Oil and Gas Threat Map presents, users can enter their own address to see if they live in a threat zone.

**MORE INFORMATION:**

- To see the map and analysis, including data in spreadsheet form, video of the pollution that constitutes the threat, video interviews of impacted residents, and the science underlying the threat radius, visit [oilandgasthreatmap.com](http://oilandgasthreatmap.com)
- New Mexico Threat Map [fact sheet](#)
- 5/24 Press Conference [Recording](#)
- NM data [spreadsheet](#)
- NM [Presentation](#) of the map
- April 2022 from Eddy County methane infrared [video](#)
- ALA - State of the Air Report - [2022](#) (See Ozone Pollution)

[Earthworks](#) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting communities and the environment from the adverse impacts of mineral and energy development while promoting sustainable solutions.

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