

For Immediate Release:
Tuesday, January 10th

Contact Information:

- Antoinette Reyes, Sierra Club - Rio Grande Chapter, antoinette.reyes@sierraclub.org, 575-342-1727
- Kayley Shoup, Citizens Caring for the Future, kayley.shoup.ccff@gmail.com, 575-302-7587
- Wendy Atcitty, Naeva, wendy@naeva.org, 505-510-1556
- Emily Wolf, ewolf@npca.org, New Mexico Senior Program Coordinator, National Parks Conservation Association
- Lucas Herndon, Energy Policy Director ProgressNow New Mexico, lucas@progressnownm.org, 575-342-1505
- Tannis Fox, Western Environmental Law Center, fox@westernlaw.org, 505-629-0732

**VISUAL: [Earthworks optical gas images of oil and gas pollution in NM from 2022](#)

New Mexicans Testify for Stronger EPA Oil and Gas Methane Pollution Safeguards

Supplemental Rule Includes Safeguards to Ensure Oil and Gas Operators Monitor and Stop Climate-Warming Methane Leaks

Albuquerque, NM - President Biden and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are holding public comment hearings on [proposed supplemental rules](#) to cut methane and other harmful pollutants from new and existing oil and gas operations across the country, an update and improvement to the original draft from 2021.

The hearings start Tuesday, January 10th and will run through Thursday, January 12th. The agency will hear from people across the country urging EPA to further strengthen the draft and quickly finalize and implement the rule so communities can realize the benefits as soon as possible. 40 New Mexicans from an array of community organizations will speak.

The [EPA proposal](#) would establish strong, commonsense protections against methane and other harmful pollution from the oil and gas industry. A strong methane rule will help the United States meet its emissions reduction commitments [from COP27](#), and will go a long way in protecting the air families who are surrounded by oil and gas pollution on a daily basis have to breathe.

Methane is a potent greenhouse gas, more than 80 times as powerful as carbon dioxide over a 20-year period, driving about a quarter of the warming our planet has experienced to date. Each year, the U.S.

oil and gas sector emits 16 million metric tons of methane into our atmosphere. Additionally, methane is emitted from oil and gas sources alongside other damaging pollutants, such as smog- and soot-forming volatile organic compounds and carcinogens like benzene and formaldehyde. This is important in New Mexico where rural, oil and gas extracting counties have F grades for smog from the [American Lung Association](#), which damages respiratory health and where climate driven fires and floods ravaged local communities.

Federal rules will strengthen and reinforce New Mexico's safeguards to protect those living closest to oil and gas. EPA's proposal requires leak monitoring and repair at all wells, including smaller wells not covered under last year's draft; establishes a program that allows third parties to submit data to EPA identifying very large emission events; retains zero-emission requirements for pneumatic equipment; and is projected to cut 36 million tons of methane, 9.7 million tons of volatile organic compounds, and 390,000 tons of hazardous air pollutants like benzene and xylene by 2035.

Advocates flagged that there is more work to be done for EPA to protect communities from Interstate air pollution such as placing limits on flaring, covering orphaned and abandoned wells, and widening standards to address emissions for storage tanks and other equipment. Frontline communities noted that their communities deserve the strongest possible methane safeguards in place to slow down climate change and to protect public health by keeping everyone's air cleaner and safer.

Statements on the EPA rule release:

“Everyday my community and I in the Permian Basin breathe in harmful air that is in violation of Clean Air Act standards. Sadly the administration has stepped back, and will no longer be considering declaring us a non attainment zone based on these violations. Actions such as these make those of us living in the most prolific oil field in the country feel left behind. This means that strong rules such as the EPA's revised methane rule are more crucial than ever. We are hopeful that this rule, and adequate enforcement of it will make a true difference in the air we breathe.” — **Kayley Shoup, Citizens Caring for the Future**

“Of the 35,000 New Mexicans living within 1,000 feet of an oil well site, over 2,700 are children under the age of five, and 19,000 are people of color. The EPA's revised rule to cut methane and other harmful pollutants will make a real difference in the health and safety of frontline communities. We need both the EPA and tribal governments to act to protect our climate and health.” — **Wendy Atcitty, Diné Energy Organizer, Naeva**

“Especially in the wake of announcements from the administration that it would be backing off the smog rule being put to use in the Permian, it's all the more imperative that swift and effective rules be put in place to help communities in oil country.” — **Lucas Herndon, Energy Policy Director, ProgressNow New Mexico**

“EPA's updated rule is a major step in the right direction. For years, methane leaks from oil and gas drilling in the Permian Basin have plagued New Mexico's national parks and communities. In fact, recent reporting showed that Permian companies emit nearly 1.4 million metric tons of methane each year. This pollution inflicts damage on the communities, fragile ecosystems, landscapes and wildlife in and around Carlsbad Caverns National Park and Chaco Culture National Historical Park, and threatens the health of people in New Mexico and beyond. By ensuring strong and lasting cuts in methane waste and

pollution across the country, the EPA can combat the climate crisis and guarantee future generations can experience our national parks.” — **Emily Wolf, New Mexico Senior Program Coordinator, National Parks Conservation Association**

"After over a year since its initial introduction, we are encouraged to see these rules crackdown on leaks. Air pollution knows no boundary, these rules will meaningfully improve life for New Mexico communities bordering states lacking meaningful protections, like Texas. It is vital that the EPA sets a federal floor for methane and other harmful pollutants from new and existing oil and gas operations. While there is room for improvement, this is a strong start in ensuring that our communities' air gets cleaned up for healthier, fuller lives." — **Antoinette Reyes, Sierra Club Rio Grande**

“The EPA’s supplemental rule represents a significant step forward in U.S. efforts to curb the worst effects of climate change. We appreciate that EPA listened to the vast amount of public input it received on last year’s draft proposal and is proposing measures to ensure the rule’s air quality and public health benefits are felt where they are most needed, in frontline communities like those in the Permian Basin and the Four Corners.” — **Tannis Fox, senior attorney, Western Environmental Law Center**

For more details about the rules or to view the hearings visit:

<https://www.epa.gov/controlling-air-pollution-oil-and-natural-gas-industry/public-hearing-epas-supplemental-proposal>

NM speakers registered:

- Tuesday, January 9: <https://youtu.be/gS9R9AAZkAo>
 - Session 1 (8 - 11 AM MT):
 - Wendy Atcitty
 - Camilla Feibelman
 - Norman Norvelle
 - Rev. Lynne Hinton
 - Paige Grant
 - Ana Rios
 - David Weymouth
 - Session 2 (11:30 - 2 PM MT):
 - Diana Woods
 - John Andrews
 - Rev. Talitha Arnold
 - Session 3 (3 - 6 PM MT):
 - Don Schreiber
 - Sister Joan Brown
 - Sister Marlene Perotte
- Wednesday, January 10: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5mbZclaT5QA>
 - Session 1 (8 - 11 AM MT):
 - Ruth Striegel
 - Ward McCartney
 - Jeff Thrope

- Session 2 (11:30 - 2 PM MT):
 - Antoinette Reyes
 - Pastor Dave Rogers
 - David Robertson
 - Ford Stone
 - Sister Odile Courier
- Session 3 (3 - 6 PM MT):
 - Chris Dizon
 - State Rep. Tara Lujan
 - Terry Sloan
 - Kayley Shoup
 - Arcelia Isais-Gastelum
- Thursday, January 11: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDDNAPPUItY>
 - Session 1 (8 - 11 AM MT):
 - Father Tom Smith
 - Ann McCartney
 - Paige Knight
 - Sister Rose Marie Cecchini
 - Charles Bennett
 - Stan Renfro
 - Session 2 (11:30 - 2 PM MT):
 - Cynthia Gonzalez
 - Patricia Sheely
 - Emelie Frojen
 - Celerah Hewes
 - Karen Smith
 - Session 3 (3 - 6 PM MT):
 - Sammi Kao
 - Emily Wolf
