



WESTERN SLOPE ELECTED OFFICIALS CALL ON COLORADO TO ADDRESS OIL AND GAS EMISSIONS STATEWIDE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 11, 2019

CONTACT: Gwen Lachelt, gwen@westernleaders.org, 505-469-0380

Elected officials from across the Western Slope called today for strengthened statewide regulations to address climate pollution and hydrocarbon emissions from oil and gas operations in a letter addressed to the Statewide Hydrocarbons Emissions Reduction (SHER) Task Force.

The letter, signed by 27 county and municipal elected officials representing 14 jurisdictions, urges the SHER Task Force to recommend that the Colorado Air Quality Control Commission (AQCC) strengthen existing rules to cut methane and ozone pollution with mandatory standards that apply to all oil and gas operations. The elected officials also make a strong plea for recent amendments made to air pollution rules that were applied on the Front Range to also be applied throughout the entire state of Colorado.

In their letter, the officials also call for tighter leak detection and repair requirements within a quarter mile of communities. This request comes in the wake of the state Supreme Court's recent ruling that paves the way for a large well pad to be located just 500 feet from homes in the Garfield County community of Battlement Mesa.

"All Gunnison County Commissioners support the efforts underway by the SHER Taskforce and are supportive of the adoption of a strong regulatory plan by the Colorado Air Quality Control Commission that addresses ozone and methane emissions statewide," Gunnison County Commissioner John Messner says. "While attention has been placed historically on the impacts of development and extraction on the Front Range, those impacts are no less significant on the Western Slope and in many cases may be more impactful."

Western Slope leaders say oil and gas emissions are a statewide problem, citing a 2016 NASA study that found a 2,400-square-mile methane cloud over the San Juan Basin in southwest Colorado. The methane cloud is attributed largely to natural gas production. Additionally, the American Lung Association 2018 State of the Air Report gave multiple

Western Slope counties low grades (C or lower) for ozone. La Plata County in southwest Colorado was given an F.

“This methane ‘hotspot’ underscores the need for stronger rules to reduce emissions that apply across the state,” La Plata County Commissioner Gwen Lachelt says.

“Methane is a powerful climate change pollutant that threatens Colorado’s \$62.5 billion outdoor recreation industry, which is to say it’s harmful to our economies and our way of life.”

“We cannot afford the environmental costs of leaky or poorly supervised gas infrastructure. Unintentional, unproductive greenhouse gas emissions are no longer acceptable ‘costs of doing business’ for Coloradans or for the American people, nor should they be for a responsible energy industry,” Pitkin County Commissioner Greg Poschman says. “We all need to pitch in to maintain a stable, healthy environment for our children and their children. Let’s fix this uneven regulation now by making equitable rules apply statewide.”

“We all deserve to breathe clean air regardless of where we live,” Routt County Commissioner Tim Corrigan says. “The AQCC should adopt rules that protect air quality utilizing the best available technologies. These standards should be implemented on a statewide basis. It makes no sense to wait until air quality has already been degraded before taking action. We deserve the same protections as the Front Range of Colorado.”

In 2014, Colorado became the first state in the nation to establish rules to regulate methane emissions. In 2017, Colorado implemented pollution-reducing regulations in a nonattainment area that includes nine Front Range counties. Western Slope leaders ask the AQCC to apply Front Range emissions rules to the entire state, as well as require inspection and leak controls on facilities close to homes, schools or outdoor activity areas; increase controls to address climate change; and use regulatory rather than voluntary tools to meet those goals.

The AQCC is an appointed board within the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment that sets air quality regulations.

The SHER task force is a stakeholder group appointed by the AQCC in 2018 to inform new regulations to reduce hydrocarbon emissions from oil and gas facilities. The task force is expected to make recommendations by January 2020.

Western Leaders Network is a nonpartisan nonprofit that unites, supports and cultivates local elected and tribal officials throughout the Interior West to protect western lands and build strong, sustainable economies. Connect with us at <https://www.westernleaders.org/> and on Facebook and [Twitter](#).