



January 9, 2024

Honorable Cathy McMorris, Chair, U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee
Honorable Bill Johnson, Subcommittee Chair, U.S. Environment, Manufacturing, & Critical
Materials
United States House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairs McMorris and Johnson,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments for the hearing, "Protecting Clean American Energy Production and Jobs by Stopping EPA's Overreach."

We express our wholehearted support for the Environmental Protection Agency's new rule to reduce methane emissions from the oil and gas sector and the Methane Emissions Reduction Program, passed as part of the Inflation Reduction Act.

Western Leaders Network is an organization of local, tribal, and state elected officials across the Interior West states of Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming.

Many of our constituents live everyday with the impact of oil and gas development on their ranches, in their backyards, and in their neighborhoods. In 2014, NASA discovered a methane cloud the size of the state of Delaware over the Four Corners Region of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah. The methane hotspot is caused by methane that escapes from oil and gas operations in the San Juan Basin. These new rules and programs are crucial to reducing the needless waste of a public resource and addressing air pollution.

Responsible for more than one-third of the warming the planet is experiencing today, methane pollution is a significant contributor to the climate crisis. Cutting these emissions is key to meeting national climate targets and slowing the rate of climate change.

The oil and gas industry is the leading industrial source of methane in the U.S. In addition to preventing 58 million tons of methane waste from entering the atmosphere over the next 15 years, the EPA's newly finalized methane standards are also expected to significantly cut down

on other health-hazardous pollutants caused by the oil and gas sector. That includes preventing 16 million tons of smog-forming volatile organic compounds and nearly 600,000 tons of pollutants that can cause and worsen health problems such as asthma, cardiovascular disease and respiratory disease. The new rule is expected to result in net climate and ozone-reduction health benefits of nearly \$100 billion.

As the primary component of natural gas, methane is also a valuable source of energy and taxpayer revenue. U.S. companies currently waste enough methane to meet the yearly energy needs of more than 12 million households. The prevention of this waste will translate to more quality, good-paying jobs in the burgeoning methane mitigation industry, which has nearly doubled in size since 2017 and continues to grow; more than 75% of existing methane mitigation companies are expected to create additional jobs with new methane policies in place.

Elected officials across the Interior West are dealing daily with the health, environmental, and economic impacts of the climate crisis. The EPA's new methane standards are critical to improving public health, mitigating climate impacts, and bringing quality jobs to communities that need them.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on these crucial new rules to limit waste and taxpayer resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gwen Lachelt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gwen Lachelt
Executive Director

Attachment: WLN Letter to EPA