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## **Western Elected Officials Urge EPA to Strengthen Methane Proposal**

Today, dozens of tribal, local and state elected officials from the Interior West called on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to strengthen a draft rule that aims to limit climate-warming methane emissions from the oil and gas industry. The leaders represent millions of residents across the eight-state region, including three American Indian tribes.

Today marks the end of the EPA's 60-day public comment period after releasing a draft proposal to cut methane pollution last November. The agency is expected to finalize the standards over the next several months.

“Methane is a powerful greenhouse gas, 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide and responsible for about 25 percent of the climate change impacts we are experiencing today,” [the letter states](#). “Our communities are experiencing extreme heat and drought, the destruction of wildlife habitat, poor air quality, and depleted water resources. Our health, economies, cultural resources, and quality of life are all at risk.”

The letter was organized by Western Leaders Network, a nonpartisan nonprofit organization of 450 local, tribal and state elected officials across the Interior West working to advance conservation initiatives and climate solutions and protect democracy.

“The oil and gas industry is one of the leading causes of methane pollution in the nation, and methane is a major contributor to the climate crisis,” **said Gwen Lachelt, Executive Director of Western Leaders Network.** “It is critical that we significantly reduce climate-damaging methane emissions from oil and gas operations. These federal standards have been a long time in the making – and western leaders have been engaged in this issue since the beginning. Methane pollution degrades our air quality, wastes taxpayer dollars and threatens our fragile climate.

“The EPA's draft proposal to control these emissions is a strong start: leak detection and repair at all wells, zero-emitting requirements for off-grid well equipment, a program to respond to super-emitter events through third-party monitoring, and methane monitoring of abandoned wells until closure. The final rule must go even further by requiring that gas associated with oil drilling is captured, a broader range of storage tanks are subject to emission standards, and communities have the data and technology necessary to participate in the super-emitter response program,” Lachelt said.