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Trump oil and gas lease sales could equal half of China's annual climate emissions, new report

WASHINGTON (February 12, 2020) – Federal oil and gas leases sold under the Trump administration are set to dramatically impact the nation's ability to fight climate change, and the administration continues to keep the American people in the dark about it, according to a new report from The Wilderness Society.

Working from leasing data and production estimates pieced together from several sources, the report finds that emissions resulting from oil and gas lease sales sold at auction between January 2017 and January 2020 could produce 5.95 billion metric tons (MT) of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e), more than half of the annual emissions of China –the world's worst emitter.

The report goes on to further break down emissions by state and region, and then compare from year to year. Onshore oil and gas leases sold in the Gulf of Mexico over the last three years could result in emissions of nearly 2.1 billion MT CO₂e, while potential climate emissions from onshore sales in Alaska could multiply tenfold between 2017 and 2020.

At the current pace of leasing, emissions from the production and combustion of fossil fuels sourced from public lands and waters are projected to fall well short of the reduction target suggested by leading climate science. And this administration's leasing decisions are making that problem much worse, according to the report.

"This administration's willful ignorance to calculate and provide meaningful climate emissions information to the public is leaving us with a major blind spot in understanding how our shared resources are being managed," **said Chase Huntley, energy and climate director at The Wilderness Society.**

"The nation's public lands and waters provide an opportunity for the federal government to act immediately on climate change – reducing fossil fuel emissions and protecting valuable carbon sinks like the Tongass National Forest. The federal government should be ensuring our shared parks, forests and other public lands are working for us, not against us, in the fight against climate change."

The report comes at a critical time, when the oil and gas industry is rolling out a multi-billion-dollar public relations campaign pushing the false narrative that oil and gas production is helping combat climate change. As fossil fuel companies attempt to

rebrand themselves as “clean” to expand operations, the federal government has been giving them full support.

So far, the Trump administration has offered 461 million acres of American public lands and waters for the development of oil and gas – an area technically bigger than the state of Alaska. At the same time, the administration has rolled back efforts to curb methane pollution and undermined bedrock environmental laws such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)– all with the aim to make life easier for industry at the expense of human health and the environment.

The Wilderness Society is the leading conservation organization working to protect wilderness and inspire Americans to care for our wild places. Founded in 1935, and now with more than one million members and supporters, The Wilderness Society has led the effort to permanently protect 111 million acres of wilderness and to ensure sound management of our shared national lands. Visit www.wilderness.org.