

Talkers – The Climate Report 2020: Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Public Lands

- The US federal government is selling off America's public lands to the oil and gas industry while ignoring the enormous amount of greenhouse gas emissions that will result over the next decades.
- Oil and gas leases sold on public lands and waters between January 2017 and January 2020 could create 5.9 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent according to a new report by The Wilderness Society.
- For reference, just these leases alone have the potential to yield more than half of the annual emissions of China – the world's worst emitter.
- Even under a conservative "low-development scenario," potential emissions of these leases sold so far under the Trump administration are equivalent to the total annual emissions Brazil (roughly 1 billion MT CO₂e).
- 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 natural gas are combating climate change.
- The industry is lying when it says that oil and gas are helping solve the climate crisis – in fact, oil and gas leasing significantly contributes to the country's emissions.
- Some studies suggest the sector's emissions could be far worse than previously understood due to widespread releases of methane pollution, a climate change accelerant 80 times more damaging than carbon dioxide.
- What the industry is actually doing is replacing one emissions problem with another – globally natural gas is now the main driver of emissions growth worldwide.
- The federal government has been supportive of the industry, offering up more than 461 million acres of public lands and waters to oil and gas leasing over the last 3 years, while also rolling back efforts to curb methane pollution and undermine bedrock environmental laws such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) – which helps protect the public and the environment.
- Our public lands and waters are supposed to be managed in the public interest and should play a leading role in our fight against climate change. But the energy industry's single-minded focus on profits over people and deep pocketed support of climate denying politicians are standing in the way of a healthy future for all.
- We need a real plan to reduce climate emissions for the foreseeable future and we can start with something that we can control: our shared public lands.