

METHANE MISINFORMATION

The oil and gas industry's broken climate promises

What they SAY

ON ANTI-CLIMATE LOBBYING:

“Shell...recognizes the importance of ensuring that its membership in relevant trade associations does not undermine its support for the objectives of the Paris Agreement on climate change.”

— Joint statement on behalf of Royal Dutch Shell

ON VOLUNTARY ACTION TO CUT METHANE:

“Reducing member companies' methane emissions to near zero is a top priority for Oil and Gas Climate Initiative. We also aim to expand our impact by engaging across the natural gas value chain and in collaboration with others.”

— Oil and Gas Climate Initiative

ON GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO CUT METHANE POLLUTION:

“We advocate for sound methane policy and regulations.”

— Methane Guiding Principles



An oil and gas well site appears clean when viewed with the naked eye. Reeves County, Texas.

What they DO

ON ANTI-CLIMATE LOBBYING:

Shell pays annual dues of \$12.5-15 million to the anti-climate American Petroleum Institute, which has fought against climate-friendly policies in at least 16 states and on a national level.

ON VOLUNTARY ACTION TO CUT METHANE:

Studies show that actual, measured oil and gas methane emissions are far higher than what companies estimate and self-report.

ON GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO CUT METHANE POLLUTION:

Most of the major oil and gas companies in this report have spent millions of dollars supporting efforts that actively lobby against government efforts to cut methane pollution.



Optical gas imaging image shows methane and VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds) pollution from Primexx Energy Partners in Reeves County, Texas.

Sources: [LittleSis.org](https://littlesis.org) [OpenSecrets.org](https://opensecrets.org) [Videos of pollution](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZ8j8j8j8j8) | cutmethane.org

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Actions speak louder than words.

THE OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY'S ACTIONS SHOW US THAT THEY CANNOT BE TRUSTED.

Strong, effective, and enforceable federal standards that cut methane by 65% of their 2012 levels must be immediately enacted, and the federal agencies tasked with enforcement must be adequately resourced.

1

The Oil and Gas Industry is Worsening the Climate Crisis

The oil and gas industry has repeatedly proven it cannot be trusted on climate. The industry invested heavily in advertising campaigns and lobbying efforts for decades to deny their role in—and even the reality of—the climate crisis and hazardous health impacts from its operations. Despite internal documents showing some industry scientists acknowledging oil and gas threats to climate as early as [1968](#), the industry aggressively sought to discredit advocates, academics, and scientists who warned the public of the same dire consequences.

Even in this new era of climate plans and promises from major oil and gas companies, the reality of operators' actions fall embarrassingly short of eliminating their climate risk. In some cases, the investments in public relations and lobbying far exceed capital invested to limit climate and health pollution. In other cases, companies continue to operate recklessly without any attempts to persuade the public they are behaving otherwise.

CAUGHT IN THE ACT: Making Invisible Industry Pollution Visible

Earthworks has worked to raise the profile and advocated for solutions to cut oil and gas methane pollution for over a decade.

Methane is a greenhouse gas that is over 86 times more potent than carbon dioxide in the short-term. Climate change projections are [quickly growing worse](#) and scientists are saying we're at a climate tipping point, with just under a decade to avoid the most catastrophic impacts.

Methane is a main component of both natural gas and oil: it leaks or is intentionally released during well drilling in oil and gas fields, production, processing, transportation, storage, gas distribution, end use, and incomplete combustion of gas flares. Oil and gas operations also pollute the places where people live, work, learn, and play with volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and other health-hazardous substances that can cause re-

The New Mexico Environment Department is using Earthworks' optical gas imaging videos as evidence of air pollution, sufficient for sending enforcement letters to companies.

spiratory illness, headaches, and a range of other health problems.

Earthworks' certified thermographers have led hundreds of investigations documenting evidence of pollution in the oil and gas fields of the United States. Our advanced optical gas imaging (OGI) equipment empowers us to make normally invisible oil and gas pollution visible, making clear the widespread pollution caused by the industry.

Earthworks' conclusion is that methane and health-hazardous oil and gas pollution is a pervasive problem for the entire industry and a growing and dangerous risk to people and the planet. Oil and gas is an inherently polluting industry. If companies have been sincerely striving to cut methane emissions, their efforts to date have fallen short of what's needed to rein in pollution and reduce harm.



An oil and gas well site appears clean when viewed with the naked eye. Reeves County, Texas.



Optical gas imaging image shows methane and VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds) pollution from Primexx Energy Partners in Reeves County, Texas, 2017.

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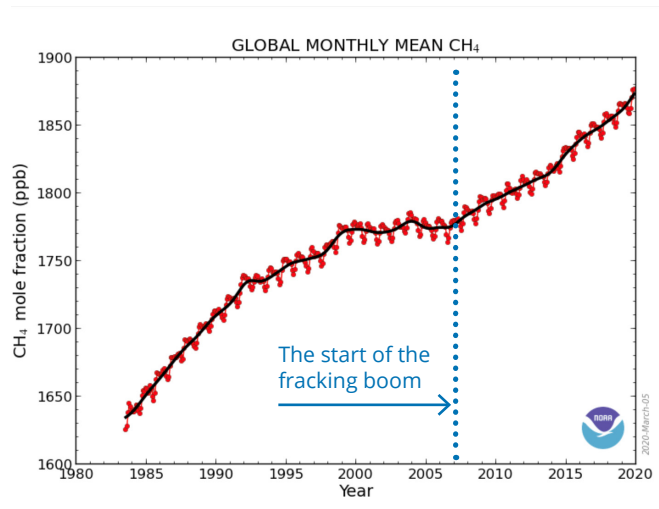
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2 Science Shows Methane is Skyrocketing and Oil and Gas Fracking is to Blame

Since the start of the fracking boom atmospheric methane pollution has steadily increased at an alarming rate. Repeatedly, studies show oil and gas is to blame, including research by [NASA](#) and the [United Nations](#), and a benchmark, evidence-based and [peer-reviewed study](#) that shows industry polluting methane more than 60% higher than U.S. EPA estimates.

In this study (Alvarez, et al), U.S. oil and gas pollution was calculated using ground-based, facility-scale measurements and then validated by aircraft observations over an area approximately accounting for 30% of U.S. gas production. U.S. EPA estimates are made using self-reported industry data and based off of out-of-the-field calculations using engineering formulas to determine leak and emissions rates. The study suggests EPA estimates are likely lower because existing inventory methods miss emissions released during abnormal operating conditions, such as unlit flares and malfunctioning equipment.

Rather than accept the science and implement practical, cost-effective solutions to reduce its pollution problem, industry has instead spent tens of millions of dollars, out of public view, on lobbying efforts to obstruct or weaken methane safeguards at all levels of government that could help to remedy their dangerous problem.



This graph shows methane concentration in parts per billion over the last 40 years. Since the beginning of the fracking boom there has been steady rise in atmospheric methane. [NOAA Global Monitoring Laboratory](#).

3 Climate Commitments or Climate Hypocrisy?

There are several metrics by which to measure the veracity of the oil and gas industry's commitments to cut methane emissions, including membership in anti-climate organizations like the American Petroleum Institute, public statements about alignment with the Paris Accord, and of course, whether the individual corporations have been caught still polluting by Earthworks (they all are).

Our research finds that:

- Only 2 of 8 companies have supported ANY strong enforceable rules to cut methane pollution (both in Colorado and both in singular instances of limited safeguards for venting and flaring).
- Every major oil and gas company is still paying dues to one or more lobbying groups opposing government climate action and making contributions to anti-climate politicians.
- No company has significantly cut problems with climate pollution, based on Earthworks sampling from hundreds of field investigations in the oil and gas fields across the U.S.
- Because the industry's methane reduction performance has failed to match its promises, future company commitments on climate should be treated with skepticism: don't trust, verify.

Coupled with the reality that gives the world less than a decade to avoid climate catastrophe, these conclusions demand bolder, broader, faster action by the federal government, such as executive actions that would reduce methane pollution by 65% below 2012 levels by 2025, and by state governments, as currently on going in Pennsylvania, Colorado, California and New Mexico.

Again, actions speak louder than words, and the actions of companies that make multiple billions of dollars a year while emitting hundreds of tons of methane—which is 86 times more powerful a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide—should speak far louder than the words from their latest marketing campaign. That is why we need enforceable federal standards that cut methane by 65% of their 2012 levels. And we need them to be enacted immediately.

Sources: [LittleSis.org](#) [OpenSecrets.org](#) [Videos of pollution](#) | [cutmethane.org](#)

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Oil and Gas Methane Scorecard



CLICK! Click the text or icons in the chart to reveal the source of information

WHAT THEY SAY Committed to support government rules	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	✓	—	—
WHAT THEY DO Oppose Trump's methane rollbacks	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
WHAT THEY DO Supports strong, enforceable state rules to cut methane?	No	No	No	Yes*	No	No	No	Yes

WHAT THEY SAY Voluntary promise to cut methane	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	✓	—	✓
WHAT THEY DO Have they stopped polluting methane? See all videos here	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

WHAT THEY SAY Promised to pull funding from anti-climate groups	✓	✓	✓	—	—	✓	—	—
WHAT THEY DO Pull funding from API?	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
WHAT THEY DO Pulled funding from US Chamber of Commerce?	No	No	No	No	No	—	No	No
WHAT THEY DO Pulled funding from the Independent Petroleum Association of America?	No	—	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
WHAT THEY DO Pulled funding from the American Fuel and Petroleum Manufacturers?	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	—	No	No
WHAT THEY DO Pulled funding from Western Energy Alliance?	No	Yes	No	No	No	—	—	No

2019 LOBBYING DISCLOSURES	\$7.8 Million	\$5.6 Million	\$9.8 Million	\$9.3 Million	\$4 Million	\$1.5 Million	\$4.8 Million	\$8.7 Million
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* Noble, a subsidiary of Chevron, supported rules to limit venting and flaring.

Disclaimer: Because the oil and gas industries lack transparency much of this information comes from documents provided to advocates/media by industry insiders.

cutmethane.org

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