

# New Mexico ranks worst in the west on methane protections

*New report highlights the need for federal methane waste regulations*

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**Albuquerque, NM** - (November 27, 2018) –New Mexico has the worst natural gas waste regulations in the country, with more methane (the primary component of natural gas) wasted from oil and gas production on federal and tribal lands than any other state, according to a new report released today by The Wilderness Society and Taxpayers for Common Sense.

*The State of Methane*, finds that between \$182 and \$244 million worth of natural gas is wasted across federal lands in New Mexico each year, causing taxpayers to lose out on as much as \$27 million in tax and royalty revenues annually. This yearly wasted gas amount is enough natural gas to meet the annual heating and cooking needs of every home in the state.

The report provides a comprehensive analysis of state regulations for managing natural gas waste across the eight states with the most federal oil and gas leasing and production (California, Colorado, Wyoming, North Dakota, Utah, Alaska, Montana and New Mexico). Each state's guidelines are compared to nine major provisions of the 2016 Bureau of Land Management (BLM) [Methane Waste Prevention Rule](#). The 2016 rule, which established a complete suite of requirements that would substantially reduce natural gas waste and methane emissions from public lands, was [repealed by the Trump administration](#) and replaced by a rule that relies almost entirely on whatever state regulations exist.

However, the report's analysis shows that the states have wildly different approaches when it comes to managing natural gas waste. Colorado has existing requirements that meet or even exceed portions of the 2016 rule, while New Mexico has zero requirements that meet or exceed any of the previous rules, leaving significant sources of methane waste completely unregulated across the state.

The natural gas waste issue is compounded in New Mexico by the ongoing boom in the Permian Basin. As the economics in the basin have improved, the area has seen increased investment, a surge in leasing and rising oil production. Increased development coupled with inadequate and outdated infrastructure and weak state regulations have led to rampant waste. From 2009 to 2013, flared gas volumes rose a staggering 2,255%, while federal producing acreage in the state has increased by almost 1 million acres since 2011, according to the report. If New Mexico's oil and gas regulations are not updated, the state's gas waste is likely to continue or even increase.

"New Mexico has an opportunity to make a real impact by addressing this issue, especially given that the incoming Governor and state land commissioner have both expressed concern for the problem and stated they wanted to address it," said Michael Casaus, New Mexico state director for The Wilderness Society.

"Taxpayers lose millions of dollars in valuable revenue in New Mexico where royalty-free methane waste is a growing problem. Thankfully, Senators Udall and Heinrich have made clear they are serious about taking steps to address methane waste and taxpayer losses," said Ryan Alexander, president of Taxpayers for Common Sense.

Given New Mexico's lack of state protections and high rates of production, the repeal of the 2016 BLM Methane rule will disproportionately impact New Mexican's health with the continued negative impacts caused by methane pollution and their wallets by causing them to lose out on important royalty revenues illustrating the serious need for statewide action.

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*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 109 million acres of wilderness and to ensure sound management of our shared national lands.*  
[www.wilderness.org](http://www.wilderness.org).

*Taxpayers for Common Sense is a nonpartisan budget watchdog that has served as an independent voice for American taxpayers since 1995. Its mission is to ensure that the federal government spends taxpayer dollars responsibly and operates within its means.*  
[www.taxpayer.net](http://www.taxpayer.net)