

# THE DENVER POST

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**Federal methane guidelines modeled on Colorado's rule, also necessary**

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The recent two-year anniversary of the Colorado methane rule, the first statewide comprehensive regulation of methane pollution from oil and gas operations, was recognized at the University of Colorado Denver last month. And there was much cause for celebration, because the rule is working.

A panel of experts gathered to discuss the success of Colorado's methane regulations, and how to build on them going forward. Leaders from the state government, methane mitigation industry and conservation community discussed with interested Coloradans what has made Colorado a leader in reducing methane and what the federal government can do moving forward.

Methane, the main component of natural gas, is an extremely potent greenhouse gas. Colorado's rule reduces the amount of methane in the atmosphere by providing incentives for oil and gas companies to capture gas that would otherwise be lost during production.

And even though it's still relatively new, positive results are already obvious. A survey of oil and gas operators in the state earlier this year, conducted by the Center for Methane Emissions Solutions, showed that Colorado's rule has improved air quality and promoted worker safety. Also, many in industry are profiting because, instead of releasing natural gas into the atmosphere, it is being used to heat homes and power buildings.

In fact, Colorado's rule is working so well, the federal government has used it as a model for new guidelines for capturing wasted methane across the country. These guidelines were the other focus for the CU Denver meeting.

Earlier this year, the Department of the Interior and Bureau of Land Management announced a proposal to stop wasting energy on our national public lands. The proposal, which will be finalized later this year, was largely based on Colorado's guidelines, with a few important improvements.

For example, the BLM's proposal addresses flaring, the intentional burning of methane into the atmosphere, while Colorado's rule does not. Reducing flaring is an important step to reducing pollution.

It is important that the government work to end oil and gas waste, whether it is in the form of leaky pipes or intentional flaring. We have to cut down on this waste.

When oil and gas is produced on public lands, half of the royalties are returned to fund state budgets. Previously uncaptured gas saved by BLM's rule will result in more money for Colorado. This means money for our roads, bridges, emergency services, and education. This would make our job in the legislature of passing a balanced budget a little bit easier.

National regulations for public lands are important, and not just because of the money that Colorado citizens are owed. Many residents in this state share air with neighboring states that don't have the same regulations that we do.

If you are in Durango, Colorado's smart regulations won't help stop pollution coming over the border from New Mexico. If you live in Fort Collins, pollution from the north can, and likely does, affect your air quality. And if you live in Grand Junction, oil and gas development in Utah likely contributes to the air quality problems there.

That's why it is crucial that the federal government level the playing field for all states and all public lands, which are owned by every American. We need strong regulations at both the state and national levels for our resources, our air and our budgets.

I spent more than six years working at the Department of the Interior and I am happy to see that the agency is looking to follow Colorado's lead. I hope Interior will finalize strong regulations as soon as possible to reduce unnecessary pollution from oil and gas development on our public lands. National guidelines will make sure that our publicly owned resources are no longer wasted and that our state — and every other state — will get its fair share of revenues.

*State Rep. KC Becker represents Colorado House District 13, which includes western Boulder County, Gilpin, Clear Creek, Grand and Jackson counties. She is a former public lands attorney.*