

# ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL

## EPA methane regulations concern us all

By Camilla Feibelman / Sierra Club, Rio Grande Chapter Director  
Friday, December 4th, 2015 at 12:02am

The nation's biggest methane cloud hovers over the Four Corners area. Methane, a component of natural gas, doesn't just come from cows. In fact, most of the cloud is from methane that is leaked, vented and flared off at oil and gas operations throughout the state. Though it's invisible to the naked eye, it's 86 times more potent as a climate-heating gas than carbon dioxide.

Meanwhile, though a cloud of sadness hovers over Paris, world leaders have still convened there to seek an agreement on preventing the worst consequences of climate disruption.

Though past climate talks have failed, this time around leaders have come to Paris with a particular urgency. They have come with commitments in hand that can move the conference toward the required unanimous ratification of the agreement. Although the outcomes of Paris won't do everything needed to protect our children and theirs, it is an important start.

President Obama has committed to reducing global-warming gases that we all emit 17 percent by 2020. To do this he has proposed a portfolio of actions that will help move our country toward a sustainable energy future. A major part of the package seeks to reduce methane emissions throughout the country. These reductions will occur through implementation of rules issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Today marks the end of the comment period on rules the EPA has proposed to control methane escape from oil and gas production.

I attended a September EPA public hearing in Denver with 10 other New Mexicans who for an array of reasons are concerned about methane pollution and want EPA and BLM rules implemented as soon as possible.

Our delegation included members of the Navajo Nation concerned about the impacts of oil and gas extraction on Chaco Canyon and Navajo residents impacted by oil and gas leasing on their

lands. Our group included kids as young as 12 who testified, concerned about the suffering global warming could impose on their generation. Residents of Farmington expressed concern about the respiratory health impacts of extraction, while a former oil and gas worker described being kept in the dark from the dangers of toxic pollutants like methane.

We all concurred (that) controlling methane in our state is beneficial in a number of ways. First, it will stimulate a growing business around methane capture. Eleven New Mexico companies already exist to do this work. Second, it will help capture a resource held in trust by all of us that has value, that can be sold and used, but should never be wasted, especially when companies are pressing to build more wells all the time on public lands. And, finally, capturing methane is something we can do right now, in the short term, with existing tools to curb global climate disruption. Global warming can feel like an insurmountable issue, but this is something that can make a difference now.

While these regulations won't fix the global warming, they are a step in the right direction to reducing the impacts of methane and will be part of New Mexico's contribution to building climate hope for the future. It's not too late to comment on the EPA methane rules. You have today and can do so at: [www.sc.org/CutMethane](http://www.sc.org/CutMethane).