



January 25, 2017

The Honorable Rob Bishop  
Chairman  
U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Bishop:

Western Energy Alliance strongly supports the use of the Congressional Review Act to overturn the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Waste Prevention, Production Subject to Royalties, and Resource Conservation Rule, otherwise known as the venting and flaring rule.

Western Energy Alliance represents over 300 companies engaged in all aspects of environmentally responsible exploration and production of oil and natural gas in the West. Alliance members are independents, the majority of which are small businesses with an average of fifteen employees.

The oil and natural gas industry adopted an environmental ethic decades ago, and protecting the environment is a primary consideration for all activities that potentially may have an impact. This ethic is embodied by industry's efforts to reduce methane emissions through voluntary means. Methane emissions from oil and natural gas production have declined by 21% since 1990 without federal regulation, even as natural gas production has increased by 47%.<sup>12</sup> The industry is no longer the largest source of anthropogenic methane emissions, as National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and other studies have shown.<sup>34</sup> Industry has been continuously innovating to reduce emissions, and its success along with the market incentive to capture and sell as much natural gas as possible will continue without new rules from BLM.

The BLM venting and flaring rule will have damaging consequences not only for our industry, but for rural communities across the West. BLM claims its new rule will increase federal royalties on otherwise "wasted" natural gas production, which it values at \$17 million annually.<sup>5</sup> However, an economic analysis by John Dunham & Associates estimates the BLM rule would capture less than \$4 million in new royalties but at a staggering cost of

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<sup>1</sup> [U.S. Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report: 1990-2014](#), EPA, April 2016

<sup>2</sup> [U.S. Natural Gas Marketed Production](#), Energy Information Administration, December 2016

<sup>3</sup> [Upward Revision of Global Fossil Fuel Methane Emissions Based on Isotope Database](#), Schwietzke et. al., October 2016

<sup>4</sup> [A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Shift from Fossil-Fuel to Biogenic Methane Emissions Indicated by <sup>13</sup>CH<sub>4</sub>](#), Schaefer et. al. March 2016

<sup>5</sup> [Venting and Flaring Rule Regulatory Impact Analysis](#), Bureau of Land Management, January 2016

\$1.26 billion.<sup>6</sup> The impacts will be felt across the West through \$997,199,000 of dollars in lost output, wages, royalties, and \$114,112,000 in lost tax receipts by local, state, and federal government.

Furthermore, the venting and flaring rule is a usurpation of air quality regulatory authority by BLM. Congress gave EPA and states authority to regulate air quality under the Clean Air Act (CAA), not BLM. BLM's rule largely contains CAA-like provisions, and much of its purported value are in the form of monetized air quality benefits. As a land management agency, BLM lacks not only the statutory authority but the resources and expertise to regulate air quality.

Western Energy Alliance strongly supports use of the Congressional Review Act to roll back this clear overreach of federal authority in the form of a rule that will provide very little environmental benefit, but at great cost. We urge Congress to act swiftly to overturn the BLM venting and flaring rule. We very much appreciate your committee's leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,



Kathleen M. Sgamma  
President

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<sup>6</sup> [Venting and Flaring Rule Comments, Appendix A](#), Western Energy Alliance, April 2016