**New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light**

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New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light

EPA Methane Rollback Hearing

Docket Identification Nos. [EPA-HQ-OAR-2017-0483, FRL-9984-38-OAR]

EPA Region 8 Office

1595 Wynkoop Street

Denver, Colorado 80202

Public Hearing Testimony Statement:

New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light works with churches, mosques, sanghas, and temples across New Mexico to care for creation and communities. We work to prevent the greatest harms from climate change with positive efforts, especially for the most vulnerable.

Our faith communities are the ones who minister with people when they suffer health problems from pollution. Our communities are the ones who address the needs of the vulnerable populations who are suffering from climate change. For us preventing methane pollution from the oil and gas industry, which is 86 times more powerful than carbon dioxide in creating climate change, is an ethical and moral concern of utmost importance.

The responsibility of the EPA is for the Common Good. Weakening oil and gas pollution standards acts directly against the mission of the EPA to protect the health and safety of children, adults and families. In addition, these rules were part of the promise the United States made that assisted in affirming the UN Paris Climate Agreement, which all of the major religious tradition’s governing bodies support.

Many religious leaders, including Pope Francis continue to plead for both prevention of pollution and increasing economic development, both of which can happen under the EPA New Source Performance Standards as they were originally approved. "The yoke of poverty caused by the often tragic movement of migrants can be removed by prevention, consisting of development projects that create jobs and offer the capacity to respond to climactic and environmental changes," Pope Francis stated at the UN, World Food and Agriculture meeting, October, 2017.

The people of faith and faith leaders from 85 congregations representing some 25,000 people throughout New Mexico want clean air and responsible stewardship of resources and creation. We have a special responsibility to the children, the most vulnerable. Methane pollution is also an environmental justice concern disproportionately affecting larger populations of people of color and our indigenous brothers and sisters.

In addition, capturing methane increases royalties in New Mexico, which are used for our education funds, can assist our state budget improve education for our children with a vision of moving out of last nationally in education.

The Book of Numbers in the Old Testament 35:33 states, “You shall not pollute the land in which you live.” Our Muslim brothers and sisters have teachings of balance and not wasting creation, which is from Allah. “…And do not commit abuse on the earth, spreading corruption.” [Qur’an, 2:60](http://quran.com/2/60)

Rolling back EPA’s methane standards is polluting the air and land which are sacred, it is committing abuse to our earth and communities of life. The EPA standards right now will reduce emissions from over 36,000 wells all around the country, including cutting 21,635 tons of methane, around 6,000 tons of smog-forming volatile organic compounds, and 450,000 pounds of toxic air pollutants, each year.

There will be many victims if this policy is rolled back. They are the children with increased asthma. Pregnant women and babies. School children instead of being helped by royalties to pay teachers will make miss more school days and pay emergency rooms because of asthma attacks to their tender lungs. All of God’s creatures suffer when we act irresponsibly. And, there are brothers and sisters outside of the United States that climate changing methane silently and steadily hurts.

One of the victims I met this past weekend at the southern border of New Mexico. He was a farmer from Guatemala who has suffered unprecedented drought over the past six years intensified by climate change trends. His farm had produced no corn and his family was hungry. He did not want to leave his land or his country. He had to choose between starving and leaving. EPA methane rules are a long term national security choice to prevent worse harms from climate change. Each year the number of displaced migrants around the world grows from climate disruption.

Each year the number of United States citizens who become internal migrants displaced from more intense hurricanes, fires, and flooding grows. They join the millions of women, children, and men around the world on the move, in part due to climate disruption. Now is the time to reduce methane to stop even more effects of climate disruption. In the short and long term methane rules are a financially responsible choice.

In the Catholic encyclical, Laudato Si: On Care of Our Common Home Pope Francis reminds us that environmental concerns are linked to social and human concerns. Environmental, social and economic concerns must be addressed with an integral ecology. “Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach.” The original EPA methane rules are a great step toward an integrated approach to social, economic and environmental needs. As faith leaders and people of faith, we request EPA Methane Rules to remain without rollbacks.

In the Name of the members of New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light

Sister Joan Brown,osf

Executive Director