

[First Look: Bureau of Land Management's Proposed Cutback of the 2016 Methane and Waste Prevention Rule](#)

Reduces management and monitoring regulations to prevent methane waste from oil and natural gas extraction on public lands.

Updated last **March 5, 2018**



WHAT IT DOES

On February 22, 2018, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) published a [Proposed Rule](#) that would modify certain requirements pertaining to oil and natural gas extraction on BLM-managed lands. In 2016, the Obama Administration finalized new rules intended primarily to reduce [flaring and venting](#) of natural gas. Flaring refers to the combustion of unusable natural gas at the extraction site while venting refers to releasing unusable natural gas into the atmosphere. Both flaring and venting can be considered “wasting” extracted natural gas since the gas does no useful work; in addition, flaring and venting produce [harmful emissions](#) of air pollutants and greenhouse gases. The 2016 Methane and Waste Prevention Rule required operators to publish plans detailing their efforts to minimize flaring and venting, and compelled the use of certain types of equipment, monitoring, and maintenance practices to minimize gas waste.

The new Proposed Rule removes most of the requirements created by the 2016 rule. In the text of the Proposed Rule, BLM states that the 2016 requirements are no longer in line with BLM policies, do not provide benefits that outweigh their costs, and must be revised for BLM to be in compliance with [Executive Order 13783](#), issued by President Trump. The difference between the cost-benefit analyses performed by the Obama and Trump Administrations largely rest on [how costs from climate change](#) are considered, similar to the debate over [repealing the Clean Power Plan](#). This Proposed Rule marks at least the [fifth attempt](#) by the Trump Administration to modify, repeal, or replace the Methane and Waste Prevention Rule. The Proposed Rule will now be subject to 60 days of public comment after which BLM is expected to publish a Final Rule.

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