



# Energy & the Law

## What's New in the Methane Debate?

By Charles Sartain on October 3, 2017

POSTED IN CLIMATE CHANGE, HYDRAULIC FRACTURING, POLLUTION

Occasionally we visit issues larger than one-off courthouse decisions. Here are a few selected stories on the extent to which fracking contributes to rising levels of methane and, maybe, to climate change. There are conflicting facts and opinions, so decide for yourself. If you find a tilt in one direction, we're just levelling the field. See the last entry.



### Climate.gov

- A publication of the NOAA.
- Worldwide methane levels are hitting new highs.
- Attempts to clarify the connection between the post-2007 uptick in global methane levels and the rapid deployment of fracking in the US have failed.
- Peer-reviewed studies conclude that microbial sources of methane such as wetlands, agriculture, ruminant animals and rice paddies are responsible for the increase in global methane emissions since 2007.
- Research into a chemical fingerprint in methane, a rare isotope called carbon-13, indicates a drop in methane from oil and gas production.

## Center for Biological Diversity

- Reports the EPA estimate that methane volumes equivalent to taking 9 million cars and light trucks off the road could be achieved globally by 2020 at a cost benefit or at no cost.
- As is typical of this organization, the conclusion is unsupported by facts, analysis, or citation to a source.
- They do acknowledge that methane is also naturally released by the decay of organic matter and wetlands.

## Energy in Depth

- Reports on methane misinformation from a National Geographic TV show featuring celebrity chef Mark Bittman.

## Inside Climate News

- Exxon promises to cut methane leaks in its operations.
- Their opinion: This commitment shows that the entire industry can stop methane emissions if it wanted to.
- It's a publication of the Environment Defense Fund, but they have a point. There are things the industry could do better.

## Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

- Methane emissions in 2015 fell substantially from 2012 (but up a bit from 2014) as natural gas production from fracking is rising.

## Skeptical Science

- Many peer-reviewed publications suggest that the EPA underestimates fossil fuel-related methane emissions by 30 to 100 percent or more, pointing to a 30 percent increase in US emissions since 2006.
- They acknowledge isotopic evidence that global warming increases are dominated

by biogenic sources.

- They advocate the “keep-it-in-the-ground” approach to emissions reductions and describe how fossil fuels could become “stranded assets” in the coming years if the goals of the Paris agreement were followed.

### University of Texas Bureau of Economic Geology

- Research has found that methane in well water in Parker and Hood counties, Texas, is probably from shallow natural gas deposits in the Strawn formation, not from natural gas leaks caused by fracking operations in the deeper Barnett Shale.
- You can see the report in the journal **Groundwater** but you'll have to pay for it.

### You might be paranoid but they're still out to get you

- **Watts Up With That** employs statistics to show left-liberal bias in Google search results.
- Maybe this explains why it's easy to find global-warming alarmism on the internet.

**Musical interlude**; debate is futile?

### Related Posts

Harvey and Climate Change, and Consideration of a Retained Acreage Clause

Why Leaving the Paris Climate Accord Could Be a Good Thing

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