

# Biden Administration to Restart Oil, Gas Leasing on Public Lands

By [Center For Biological Diversity](#)

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*The Bureau of Land Management [announced](#) today that it will resume oil and gas leasing on public lands, violating President Biden’s campaign promise to end new oil and gas leasing and locking in new extraction that thwarts his [pledge](#) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.*

Despite [its pause](#) on new oil and gas leasing and drilling on publicly owned lands and waters, the Biden administration approved more drilling permits in 2021 than President Trump did in the first year of his presidency, according to [federal data analyzed](#) by the Center for Biological Diversity.

The oil and gas industry continues raking in record profits while communities pay the price. The watchdog organization Accountable.US [reported](#) in February that Shell, Chevron, BP and Exxon made more than [\\$75.5 billion in profits](#) in 2021, some of their highest profits in the past decade.

The communities most at risk from new fossil fuel extraction are primarily Black, Brown and Indigenous peoples, people of the global majority, and those on the frontlines of fossil fuel industry expansion. These are the same communities that turned out in record numbers to get Biden elected in 2020 and who have since been [urging Biden to use his executive authority](#) to fulfill his campaign promise and ban new federal fossil fuel projects.

Several [analyses](#) show that climate pollution from the world’s already-producing fossil fuel developments, if fully developed, would push warming past 1.5 degrees Celsius, and that avoiding such warming requires [ending](#) new investment in fossil fuel projects. Thousands of organizations and communities from across the United States have called on Biden to halt federal fossil fuel expansion and [phase out](#) production consistent with limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Statements from climate, social justice and environmental organizations:

“As frontline community members in the Permian Basin that have been advocating for putting a stop to new oil and gas leasing on federal lands, Citizens Caring for the Future finds it extremely disheartening that BLM is going forward with these lease sales,” said Kayley Shoup of Citizens Caring for the Future. “Our day-to-day life and health is directly affected by these sales and the subsequent production that comes along with them. It would take a small army to truly enforce regulation here in the Permian, and we know that is the reality in oil and gas regions around the country. We live our lives surrounded by the industry and we understand that in order to take on climate change and make a meaningful dent in emissions the Biden administration must take action that puts a stop to new development.”

“The Biden administration’s claim that it must hold these lease sales is pure fiction and a reckless failure of climate leadership,” said Randi Spivak, public lands director at the Center for Biological Diversity. “It’s as if they’re ignoring the horror of firestorms, floods and megadroughts, and accepting climate catastrophes as business as usual. These so-called reforms are 20 years too late and will only continue to fuel the climate emergency. These lease sales should be shelved and the climate-destroying federal fossil fuel programs brought to an end.”

“The West is drying up and going up in flames. Between extreme drought, the shrinking of the Colorado River, and now urban wildfires in the winter, how much more death, destruction and devastation do we have to see before this administration takes action?” said Natasha Léger, executive director of Citizens for a Healthy Community. “It’s time for climate leadership and to stop leasing our public lands for oil and gas development. We need heroes to break through the political and economic inertia that has us on a collision course to inhabitability.”

“As the Interior Department announces that it plans on continuing oil and gas leasing on federal land, Sovereign Inupiat for a Living Arctic condemns any further extraction, especially within the Arctic,” said Siqiniq Maupin, executive director of [Sovereign Inupiat for a Living Arctic](#). “Our lands are warming at a higher rate than anywhere else in the world, causing detrimental impact to the fragile ecosystems that call it home and directly impacting the rest of the world, as well. With conservative climate models predicting that we have less than 30 years to radically change our relationship with oil and gas, the future rests in the United States’ hands. We can no longer commodify our land and water, especially at the rate climate change is occurring. We are nature fighting back.”

“It is unconscionable that the BLM will go forward with these oil and gas lease sales as we continue to see the devastating effects of climate change, particularly in the Southwestern United States,” said Deborah McNamara, campaigns director at 350 Colorado. “According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s August 2021 assessment, there is ‘high confidence’ that human-influenced rising temperatures are a direct cause of the extension of the wildfire season, increased drought, and decreased precipitation in the southwest United States. In order to curb emissions and do what scientists are telling us we must do in order to avert the absolute worst climate impacts, we need a rapid phase out of fossil fuel production by 2030. Continuing business as usual at the BLM with ongoing oil and gas lease sales will not get us where we need to be in order to solve the climate crisis and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”

“How much more can Gulf Coast states endure? Most of us weren’t born with a silver spoon to get lawyers all the time to fight these civil laws aka ‘environmental acts,’ or have the luxury of property rights because it was all taken from us so long ago,” said Love Sanchez of Indigenous Peoples of the Coastal Bend. “Now here we are, working class people, simple people, 95% of the time BIPOC people, that just want to protect our land and water. Then, I’m not surprised, we now have the Interior, who decides they want to continue their projects in the Gulf Coast. It’s a very disappointing thing to hear. Fortunately, we will continue to be persistent in protecting these waters.”

“We have heard a lot of rhetoric from President Biden and his administration about the need to take action on climate,” said Kyle Tisdell, climate and energy program director with the Western Environmental Law Center. “But not only is the administration not doing everything it could — it is not really doing anything. Climate action was a pillar of President Biden’s campaign, and his promises on this existential issue were a major reason the public elected him. Achieving results on climate is not a matter of domestic politics. It’s life and death.”

“Candidate Biden promised to end new oil and gas leasing on public lands, but President Biden is prioritizing oil executive profits over future generations,” said Nicole Ghio, senior fossil fuels program manager at Friends of the Earth. “Biden’s Interior Department has even issued permits to drill at a rate faster than the Trump administration. Now, the Bureau of Land Management is preparing to hold its first public lands lease sale, despite having no legal obligation to do so. If Biden wants to be a climate leader, he must stop auctioning off our public lands to Big Oil.”

“This is pure climate denial,” said Jeremy Nichols, climate and energy program director for WildEarth Guardians. “While the Biden administration talks a good talk on climate action, the reality is, they’re in bed with the oil and gas industry. Rest assured, with the climate crisis raging, we can and will fight back. We can’t afford not to.”

“The Biden administration fiddles while Rome burns,” said Shelley Silbert, executive director at Great Old Broads for Wilderness. “The most destructive fire in Colorado history consumed over 1,000 homes last December. When your house is on fire, you act immediately. Climate disasters hit us harder each day and we’re out of time. The Biden administration must address the climate crisis now, and a vital step is stopping oil and gas leasing on public lands immediately. There is no other option.”

“Right now, fossil fuel extraction on public lands and waters makes up a quarter of our greenhouse gas emissions at a time scientists are saying we must move urgently to cut emissions by at least half. Not only does it devastate our planet, it’s a handout to Big Oil at the expense of average Americans, who will bear the brunt of its societal, health and financial ramifications,” said Dan Ritzman, Lands Water Wildlife director at the Sierra Club. “We urge the Biden administration to take advantage of this historic opportunity to make good on campaign promises, fulfill a global commitment to acting on climate, and serve American communities by phasing out oil and gas production on public lands and oceans.”

“Let’s set aside all the niceties and speak plainly on this: Even people in positions of power and authority are fully aware that nothing goes unscathed in the aftermath of creating and maintaining fossil fuel infrastructures,” said Sha Merirei Ongelungel, executive director of Pasifika Uprising. “So whether you’re trying to reopen the Palau

National Marine Sanctuary for commercial fishing and potential exploratory drilling or in the United States pushing to resume oil and gas leasing on public lands, the only safe inference is that our leaders are dishonest and hungry for more money and more power. And that is wholly unconscionable. What's legal isn't always ethical and too many leaders, the world over, are demonstrating this with their utter disregard for their communities and the climate. Frankly, I'm embarrassed for these so-called leaders. For all their power and authority, they will never have the true power and solidarity needed to lead us into a safer future like grassroots movements."

"Ramping up exports of liquified natural gas to Europe in response to the invasion of Ukraine is a losing proposition that will take too long to implement to address current energy demands," said Erik Molvar, executive director of Western Watersheds Project. "Instead of taking decades to build the necessary export terminals so we can keep burning fossil fuels and turning the Earth into a fiery hellscape, we should be investing in solar production in urban settings where the energy is being used, on rooftops and parking lot awnings, so Europe and the United States can both transition to clean power sources and get that production online a whole lot faster."

"The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change could not be more clear. It is time to rapidly transition off of fossil fuels. Increasing leasing for fossil fuels on public lands is grossly misaligned with limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius and ensuring that young people inherit a habitable planet," said Zanagee Artis, executive director of Zero Hour.

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