Because of you, a retired homeowner in Pennsylvania took on the oil and gas company polluting the air near his home and won, getting them to remove leaking equipment. Because of you, two mines have not been built in Montana’s Cabinet Mountain Wilderness. Because of you, abandoned uranium mines across Colorado will soon be cleaned up. Because of you, New Mexico and Colorado have committed to reduce the methane emissions that are speeding up climate change. And because of you, fossil fuel companies can’t get away with spreading misinformation about their operations.

It’s your commitment that makes Earthworks able to link arms with vulnerable communities in their struggle against polluting corporations. On behalf of people on the front lines of mining, drilling, and fracking, thank you for joining their fight for environmental justice.

We are grateful, every single day, for your generosity.
Texas, continued

A New Documentary Tells the Story of Invisible Air Pollution.
“Blowout,” by Newsy tells the story of the West Texas Permian Basin and the impacts of the recent surge in American oil and gas production, including our work to document invisible air pollution.

Colorado

A Transformative New Law Gives Local Governments the Final Say.
The law requires that oil and gas regulations protect public health and safety. This hard-won victory shows that elections matter and that years of movement building paid off in the state putting health and safety before oil and gas profits.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Visits the Field.
In September, Earthworks had the privilege of visiting oil and gas sites on Colorado’s front range with members of Congress Joe Neguse and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Thanks to your support, impacted communities near oil and gas operations shared their experiences with these policymakers. A video we captured of pluming pollution garnered over 1.2 million views on social media.

In Colorado, Earthworks’ Pete Dronkers shows members of Congress how optical gas imaging works.

Closing Loopholes in California

Kevin Hamilton, CEO of the Central California Asthma Collaborative, was surprised when he learned that polluting industries have been able to trade emissions reductions through a San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District “bank.” He wondered if emission reduction credits should even exist. “We have nothing to draw credit against,” he says. “We are in a deficit spending mode when it comes to air quality.”

So Hamilton and other air quality advocates asked Earthworks to investigate the program. A review of hundreds of pages of documents revealed several cases in which credits were issued despite evidence that they didn’t meet legal requirements. In fact, we estimate that about 30% of the credits in the bank for volatile organic compounds and 60% of credits in the bank for greenhouse gases may be invalid.

Our report, Undeserved Credit: Why emissions banking in California’s San Joaquin Valley puts air quality at risk, was so compelling that California’s Air Review Board (CARB) decided to do its own investigation.

Changing the often cavalier way that government regulators treat industry is difficult.

But there is a direct cause-and-effect impact: You gave to Earthworks. We drew the attention of regulators to a problem. And the regulators agreed to act.

Climate Action: Holding Companies Accountable

Your support has helped turn the page on industry accountability. Several major oil and gas companies actually opposed the Trump administration’s proposed rollback of methane pollution safeguards, generating national news coverage of the methane pollution crisis.

Big Oil & Gas Join Environmentalists Against Methane Rollback – In late August, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced a proposal to dismantle federal rules to cut methane pollution. Several major oil and gas companies, including BP, Exxon, Equinor, and Shell, joined environmental groups like Earthworks in public opposition to the proposal, acknowledging its potential impact on climate.

Getting the Ear of Policymakers and Major Media – Your support has been integral in sharing our work with policymakers and media outlets. Earthworks has brought local, state, and federal officials to visit polluting oil and gas sites in Pennsylvania, Texas, Colorado, and New Mexico. Reporters from national and global news outlets have accompanied us on field trips to the Permian Basin. Without your support, we couldn’t generate such broad awareness around the need to hold oil and gas companies accountable for their pollution and the climate crisis.

Debunking the Climate “Intensity” Myth
For companies in climate denial, reducing their climate “intensity” has become an increasingly popular false narrative. Companies claim that individually, their sites are emitting less. But this ignores the fact that the number of sites has massively increased. This means more pollution and a greater climate impact overall. Earthworks has taken companies to task on this claim.
TOWARD MINING REFORM

Mining is the nation’s largest toxic polluter, yet the industry still operates under a law passed in 1872 that promotes mining over other uses of land. Unlike other industries, hardrock mining for minerals such as gold, copper, silver, and uranium are given away for free, without paying any royalties, nor requiring companies to pay for clean up of the pollution their mining causes. Government agencies have interpreted the law to mean that mining must be approved over other uses of land such as recreation, conservation, or renewable energy. This is an outrageous ripoff of taxpayers that has gone on for far too long and threatens clean water and wilderness areas.

National parks and wilderness areas are at risk. Abandoned uranium mines and mining claims dot the landscape around the Grand Canyon. Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monuments in Utah could be drilled and mined next. The Trump administration has already reduced both areas in size, opening them up to industry exploitation. Also at risk are New Mexico’s Mt. Taylor, sacred to dozens of Native American tribes; Montana’s Cabinet Mountains Wilderness; and Arizona’s Santa Rita Mountains.

Thanks to you, the Hardrock Leasing and Reclamation Act was introduced in both houses of Congress and passed a House committee vote. The bill would protect our natural heritage from irresponsible mining by no longer permitting mining over other uses of land, stop mines that permanently pollute water, ensure mining companies pay for minerals they take from public lands, and create a clean-up fund that mining companies are required to pay into.

Mining victories you made possible

Though comprehensive mining reform is not yet law, victories against irresponsible mining are still possible.

Colorado said no to mines that permanently pollute water. A new state mining law will prevent mining companies from leaving taxpayers with the costs of cleaning up the pollution they cause. The state will deny permission for proposed mines that would require water treatment for generations after the mine is reclaimed.

Colorado will force mining companies to clean up mines they abandoned long ago. Miners have kept permits active on 20 closed uranium mines in order to delay required reclamation activities. The Colorado Court of Appeals ruled that if the mine has been inactive for 10 years, the mining company must start reclamation.

One of the nation’s first protected wilderness areas remains unmined. As a result of two important court rulings in Montana, a water use permit for the proposed Rock Creek Mine in Montana’s Cabinet Mountain Wilderness was struck down. The mining company wanted to drain water permanently from rivers and streams designated as Outstanding Resource Waters to take silver and copper deposits underneath.

Another proposed mine, the Montanore mine, lost its pollution permit on the grounds that its proposal to pollute streams with harmful metals was illegal. As a result of these two rulings, this national forest wilderness and its rare grizzly bears and bull trout remain protected.

Standing in Solidarity with Indigenous Communities

The Indigenous Xinka people are resisting the reopening of the Escobal Silver mine in Guatemala. After Pan American Silver announced its intention to buy Tahoe Resources, owner of the Escobal mine, Earthworks and partners filed a complaint with the British Columbia Securities Commission and the SEC calling on regulators to investigate the companies for misleading statements and omissions related to the future of the mine. Earthworks is partnering with local leaders to ensure that the company conducts a legitimate consultation with the Xinka as required by Constitutional Court order.

Right: Cabinet Mountains Wilderness, Montana.
Below: Earthworks visits an open pit mine in Montana.
Dale Tiberie
The Making of an Activist in Pennsylvania

Dale Tiberie is a West Pike Run Township, Pennsylvania resident who invited Earthworks’ Pennsylvania and Ohio Field Advocate Leann Leiter to document air pollution from a well pad next to his home. He and his neighbors asked Leann to present the optical gas imaging footage from local wells and compressors at a township hearing. An attorney representing the oil and gas company bombarded her with questions angled to discredit Earthworks’ footage and expertise, even erroneously telling the packed township meeting room that the official state agency data she cited was incorrect.

In an email Dale sent Leann afterwards, he wrote, “You are my hero. You stood your ground with EQT’s attorney. You were the only one he tried to intimidate. We are very proud of you.”

Since then, the well operator has removed equipment from the site and is routing the gas to a nearby compressor station for processing, rather than doing it on-site. Leann did another inspection that showed only minimal emissions, and Dale is no longer observing odors. The West Pike Run Township then passed a 1000-foot setback ordinance for all new gas wells – thwarting two planned “super pads” already in the works in this tiny township.

Dale continues to be an activist. He recently testified at an EPA hearing in Dallas on the Trump administration’s proposed rollbacks of methane regulations. **Because of the support you provide, Earthworks is helping citizens like Dale become effective advocates for their communities.**