



EARTHWORKS

IMPACT REPORT 2020

YOU KEPT UP THE FIGHT

Times have been tough for our environment and our democracy. Bedrock environmental regulations have been rolled back. Destructive projects got the green light. Climate change has wreaked havoc, from wildfires to flooding to hurricanes. Fundamental human rights came under threat. A global pandemic and racial injustice revealed how our system isn't working.

Yet you kept fighting to defend our values and call for justice.

Your compassion helped those harmed by oil, gas, and mining. When fossil fuel companies used COVID-19 as an excuse to ask for exemptions from regulations and financial bailouts, you said no. When families living near oil and gas facilities faced the dilemma of staying home to avoid COVID-19 while exposing themselves to greater health risks from air pollution, you spoke out. When mining companies tried to destroy clean water and wilderness, you opposed them.

A new year will soon dawn and with it, new opportunities to right wrongs. Thank you for persevering through the hard times and standing with us on the journey ahead to realize our vision of a just, clean, and sustainable future.

We are so grateful for your generosity.

PROTECTING COMMUNITIES IN THE COVID-19 ERA

Demanding Accountability

In Pennsylvania, the state declined to police a potentially radioactive oil and gas spill until "after the shutdown concludes." In Louisiana, some parishes experienced COVID-19 death rates of 5x the national average, due at least in part to decreased air quality from oil and gas pollution. And in Washington, D.C., President Trump's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) responded to COVID-19 by loosening oversight of oil and gas companies, opening the door for more pollution across the nation.

We publicized Pennsylvania's unwillingness to police oil and gas operations and forced them to change their policy. In Louisiana, we're partnering with local organizations to protect the residents of "Cancer Alley" from a proposed plastics production project that would only increase air pollution. And in D.C. we continued to demand tough oversight of extractive industries, changing the conversation on oil, gas, and mining.

Standing with Frontline Communities

There is a proven correlation between COVID-19 fatalities and preexisting air pollution from oil and gas facilities. Your contributions to our COVID-19 relief fund provided aid to communities facing the greatest health risks from the pandemic. More than \$20,000 was distributed to 14 frontline activists and grassroots groups, many of them Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) across Texas, Louisiana, and New Mexico. In the weeks ahead, more funds will be distributed as coronavirus infections hit new highs across the country and our friends need more support.



Members of the Rise St. James group received assistance when COVID-19 posed dire threats.

Reaffirming Our Values

In the wake of the police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and other Black Americans, we reaffirmed our commitment to challenging and dismantling the systemic oppression that allows these tragedies to continue. With your support we raised funds for Black-led organizations working at the intersection of race and the environment.

Your support is helping confront environmental and social inequality at a time when our core values are at risk.



Climate protest in El Paso, Texas in September 2020.



Managing the Decline of Oil and Gas

1 Curbing Dangerous Oil and Gas Waste

You helped bring a hard-fought community victory over the finish line. Following years of persistence, New York became the first state to hold companies accountable and prevent hazardous oil and gas waste dumping. Previously, 640,000 tons of waste had been dangerously disposed of statewide. The new law requires stricter testing to determine toxicity, companies to abide by stronger regulations for transport and disposal, and companies stop road spreading of oil and gas waste.

Earthworks released reports on oil and gas waste in New Mexico and North Dakota, as a first step towards organizing communities and policy-makers to better protect impacted residents.



Earthworks thermographer Leann Leiter documenting air pollution in the field.

2 Exposing Oil and Gas Industry Villains

Our recent Texas report analyzed Senior Field Advocate Sharon Wilson's 600+ visits to nearly 300 wells, compressor stations, and processing plants since 2015. With your support, Sharon has filed 136 pollution complaints with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.



We've exposed Texas regulators' failures to stop climate catastrophe. Stories have appeared in the past year in *USA Today*, *Forbes*, *The New York Times*, and *ARTE*—a French and German news outlet that reaches 190 million households.

Your fight against new oil and gas infrastructure will stop fossil fuel expansion.

3 Stopping the Expansion of a Dying Industry

This year, the D.C. Circuit Court made it more difficult for pipeline companies to seize private property—a win for landowners. Dominion Energy and Duke Energy abandoned their proposed \$8 billion Atlantic Coast Pipeline. And legal decisions shut down the Dakota Access Pipeline and canceled a key permit for the Keystone XL Pipeline.

In Texas, the proposed Sea Port Oil Terminal would entail the construction of 50 miles of new pipeline and a new oil storage facility—unnecessary infrastructure that poses risks to communities. We secured extensions to comment periods, allowing for greater community input, and we are organizing opposition by residents, the Permian Gulf Coalition, and other grassroots groups.



New pipelines ravage the land they are built on and pose numerous risks to communities.

In Louisiana, we're fighting a reckless plastics production complex in St. James. Plastic production, a product of the oil and gas industry, harms local air quality, releases climate harming emissions, and creates more plastic waste.

Ensuring a Clean, Just and Equitable Renewable Energy Future

1 Demanding Higher Standards from the Mining Industry, and Succeeding

As we transition to a renewable energy future, our reliance on minerals will increase. Earthworks' *Ditch Ocean Dumping* and *Making Clean Energy Clean, Just and Equitable* campaigns are confronting the realities of our renewable energy mineral demands.

- **Change mining company practices** — French mining company Eramet banned the use of deep sea mine waste disposal, calling the practice outdated and harmful to marine biodiversity. With our allies in Indonesia and Norway, we are leveraging Eramet's commitment to persuade other companies to follow suit and ban deep sea mine waste disposal.
- **Influencing investors** — Major Norwegian asset manager Storebrand divested from the Ramu nickel and cobalt mine in Papua New Guinea because of environmental harm from ocean tailings dumping. Citigroup, Standard Chartered and Credit Suisse have restricted funding for mines that practice ocean dumping, and investor groups are distancing themselves from the practice.
- **Promoting responsible sourcing** — We are in dialogue with electric vehicle companies about nickel sourcing and threats from ocean dumping. We have created a network of over 70 organizations to tackle the global transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy technologies—a significant step towards a unified vision for a clean energy future. The BMW Group just joined the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance to ensure its vehicles are manufactured with only certified and responsibly sourced minerals—setting a new standard for other automakers to meet.

Your support brings us closer to the clean energy future the world desperately needs.

2 Protecting Nature by Keeping Minerals In the Ground

- **The Army Corps of Engineers denied the permit for the proposed Pebble Mine, calling the mine "contrary to the public interest."** The massive gold and copper mine would have caused irreparable harm to Alaska's Bristol Bay watershed, which supports the largest and most productive wild salmon fishery on Earth. **This is a major milestone in our more than a decade long campaign to protect Alaska's Bristol Bay, and we will continue to pursue permanent protection for the ecosystem in 2021.**
- **Reforming the antiquated 1872 General Mining Law** which deems mining "the highest and best use" of our public lands remains a top priority. We kept 1872 mining reform in the spotlight, generating influential press, securing county and tribal resolutions in support of reform, and garnering support for legislation that passed out of the U.S. House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee.
- **Defending the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** — We blocked the hardrock mining industry's attempts to circumvent the law and get permits approved under a transportation act. We also defended against the Trump administration's NEPA rollback, which the incoming Biden administration is positioned to overturn.

3 Preventing Mine Waste Disasters

We are defending communities across the globe living in the shadows of unstable and often dangerous mine waste dams.

We coordinated 150 allies in developing guidelines for responsible mine tailings management, which are being used by communities and civil society organizations in Colombia, Spain and Canada to advocate for improved mine waste storage practices.



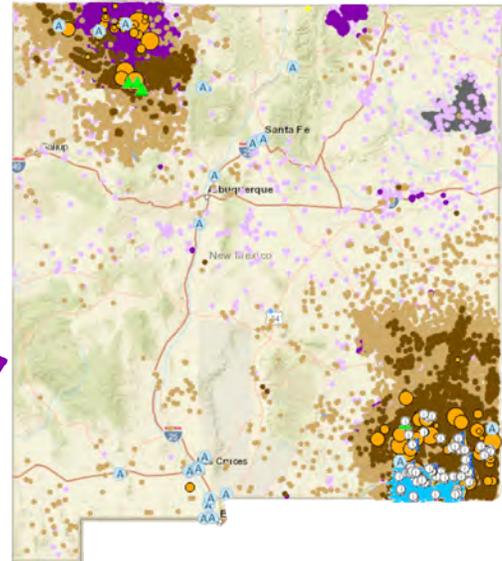
In the last 10 years, there have been over 70 tailings failures, killing more than 400 people, and damaging over 2,100 miles of waterways. Your support helps prevent future tragedies.

Protecting Our Climate Enforcing State Laws to Decrease Emissions

► **Colorado** — The law now mandates that state agencies overseeing the oil and gas industry protect public health and safety. In 2020, Earthworks, allies, and community members filled public hearings and filed comments to improve accountability and transparency. New rules require operators to inspect for air pollution monthly at facilities within 1,000 feet of residences and submit annual reports. Additionally, the state is creating a more transparent online portal for the public to submit complaints.

► **New Mexico** — The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) is using Earthworks' optical gas imaging videos as evidence of air pollution, sufficient for sending enforcement letters to companies. In response to complaints we filed, NMED issued a notice of potential violation to operators. The burden of proof has been shifted so that operators must prove that their pollution is within permit limits. You can now see our complaints and videos filed on NMED's methane and air quality map online.

New Mexico Environment Department's air monitoring map. Orange circles are volatile organic compound emissions. Tan, brown and purple show oil and gas wells, active and non active.



Amplifying Voices and Shifting Public Debate

Fox TV, CBS, the *New York Times*, and many others brought community voices to new audiences, educating the public about fossil fuels, renewable energy, and the climate.

Because of you, Earthworks field staff and certified thermographers took reporters on socially distanced trips to oil and gas sites and showed them pollution that harms health and climate. Families shared their stories of attempts to get the attention of state regulators and protect their health.

Global media covered West Texas and New Mexico's unfolding climate disaster—the Permian Basin is the world's largest oil boom that vents invisible methane, a dangerous accelerator of global temperatures.

- Methane is a potent greenhouse gas, 86x worse than CO2 when vented raw, as is the case with the rising cases of unlit flares in the Permian Basin.
- The boom and bust cycle of oil and gas and hundreds of bankruptcies threatens to leave taxpayers with the clean-up costs of abandoned wells.
- Waste from the oil and gas extraction process is a proven radioactive hazard.
- Regulators are failing to protect public health from oil and gas pollution.
- Communities oppose the oil, gas, and plastics buildout and know the detrimental effects of further expansion of the dying industry.

You are helping shift public opinion by shining a light on the true cost of oil and gas on climate and health.

Thank you! **Your support keeps us going!**
 Donate at earthworks.org/keepfighting

CBS NEWS **Inside Gen Z's Fight for Climate Change Action**



West Texas Field Associate, Miguel Escoto, featured on CBS News.



EARTHWORKS

1612 K Street NW, Suite 904 • Washington, D.C. 20006
 202.887.1872 • info@earthworks.org • earthworks.org
 EIN/Tax ID #52-1557765 • Combined Federal Campaign #41290

