



April 22, 2015

Dear Representatives:

We are writing to express our support for, and urging you to co-sponsor, the Protect our Public Lands Act of 2015<sup>i</sup> (POPLA) in the 114th Congress. Representatives Pocan and Schakowsky are the lead authors.

This bill amends the Mineral Leasing Act<sup>ii</sup> to prohibit the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) from issuing leases that permit hydraulic fracturing or fracking on our public lands.

### **Threats to Public Health**

The well-documented public health and environmental damage resulting from the heavy industrial activities of oil and gas extraction places an enormous burden on all Americans. One of the greatest contributors to that burden, documented in a series of recent public health studies<sup>iii</sup>, are the health problems associated with drilling.

As this scientific inquiry takes time to complete research and a consensus to emerge<sup>iv</sup>, this bill takes a precautionary approach in light of these health problems that citizens experience living near well pads, pipelines, compressor stations and other drilling infrastructure.

### **Threats to Climate Change**

In addition to health impacts, fracking on public lands accelerates the release of methane- an incredibly potent greenhouse gas (GHG)- that very likely will lead to devastating climate change impacts. Further, the Administration's efforts toward reducing overall GHG emissions are undermined by the fracking-enabled rapid spread of drilling on the people's lands.

EPA's most recent U.S. Greenhouse Gas Inventory shows that the oil and gas industry leaked or released approximately 74 million metric tons of methane in 2013<sup>v</sup>. These estimates are conservative: methane's impacts are even more powerful in the near term, and recent research suggests that EPA's figures may be far too low.<sup>vi</sup>

We cannot both protect our people and future generations from the worst impacts of climate change while simultaneously allowing fracking-enabled drilling.

## Threats to Our Treasured Resources

Some of our nation's most visited National Parks and Forests also face threats from fracking. Everything from water contamination and ecological damage to forest fragmentation and habitat destruction result from overlaying roads, pipelines, drill pads and other industrial infrastructure adjacent to our protected public lands.

Special places currently at risk span the continental United States from the George Washington National Forest in Virginia and the Florida Everglades to Chaco Canyon in New Mexico and California's Sequoia National Park.

The mission of the BLM is to preserve multiple uses for our public lands<sup>vii</sup>. Yet, oil and gas drilling consistently crowds out all other potential uses. Some of America's favorite places, and the tourism revenue they generate, cannot co-exist with drilling.

We greatly appreciate the leadership demonstrated by Representatives Pocan and Schakowsky. We respectfully urge your support and ask you to become a co-sponsor of POPLA. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Aaron Mintzes  
Policy Advocate, Earthworks

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<sup>i</sup> This bill was introduced as HR 5844 in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress.

<sup>ii</sup> 30 U.S.C. 193

<sup>iii</sup> [http://www.earthworksaction.org/issues/detail/public\\_health\\_and\\_gas\\_development#.VTAXQpTF840](http://www.earthworksaction.org/issues/detail/public_health_and_gas_development#.VTAXQpTF840)

<sup>iv</sup> See Physicians, Scientists, and Engineers [Toward an understanding of the environmental and public health impacts of shale gas development: an analysis of the peer reviewed scientific literature, 2009-2014](#)

<sup>v</sup> EPA Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program, Petroleum and Natural Gas Sector 2013 See <http://www.epa.gov/ghgreporting/ghgdata/reported/petroleum.html>

<sup>vi</sup> Karion, A., et al. 2013. Methane emissions estimate from airborne measurements over a western United States natural gas field. *Geophys. Res. Lett.*, 40, 4393–4397, doi:10.1002/grl.50811.

<sup>vii</sup> [http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/res/blm\\_jobs/blm\\_facts/multiple-use\\_mission.html](http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/res/blm_jobs/blm_facts/multiple-use_mission.html)