

EARTHWORKS

JOURNAL

AVOIDING CLIMATE CATASTROPHE



People Power
in Louisiana

Who Bankrolls Dirty
Mining Projects?

Is President Biden
Doing Enough?



EARTHWORKS.ORG

Dedicated to protecting communities and the environment from the adverse impacts of mineral and energy development while promoting sustainable solutions.

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EARTHWORKS JOURNAL

is the biannual magazine of Earthworks. It highlights the stories of communities impacted by extractive industries and inspires people to fight for a better future through advocacy and charitable giving.

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Earthworks Journal is a benefit of membership to Earthworks. We do not share your information with other organizations.

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Nathalie Eddy

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Together we can create a better future

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For 2021, stimulus legislation allows you to deduct up to \$300 of charitable gifts from your taxes, or up to 100% of your AGI if you itemize!

Denounce, Divest and Defund!

Stopping New Plastics Infrastructure in Louisiana

By Kaitlyn Joshua

Formosa Plastics plans to build a \$12 billion petrochemical complex in Louisiana's Cancer Alley. This predominantly Black community is already over-burdened with pollution, making the project a litmus test for environmental racism. But the St. James Parish community is fighting back, along with activists and partners in the Stop Formosa Plastics Coalition.

PEOPLE POWER We took to the streets in St. James Parish to inform the community about the Formosa Sunshine Project and its potential impacts. Residents signed a petition to encourage elected officials to intervene.

ONLINE ACTIVISM An online toxic tour, *Denounce, Divest and Defund Formosa Plastics!* reached a wide audience around the world, raising the profile of local groups and their efforts to shut down the project.

BUILDING SOLIDARITY Earthworks and partners launched an online campaign targeting the Formosa Annual General Meeting. Participants made signs and shared photos online as an act of solidarity with frontline communities impacted by Formosa.

FINANCIAL PRESSURE Stop the Money Pipeline coalition members encouraged the people of New Orleans to close their bank accounts at Chase Bank because of Chase's continued ties to the project. Passersby and participants alike closed their accounts sending an important message that we won't sit by and allow this project to proceed.

To build resistance, we know it takes in-person engagement and forming relationships.



Sharon Lavigne of Rise St. James attends the Chase Bank demonstration. Photo: Antonia Juhasz.

BREAKING NEWS: Formosa Permit Suspended

Formosa Plastics' permit for the Sunshine Project has been suspended and will require a full environmental impact statement for the proposed petrochemical complex in St. James Parish. We will keep up the fight until the project is cancelled. Essential next steps are:

- Build public opposition to the project and demand the Biden administration permanently revoke permits.
- Pressure financiers to ensure the project never receives funding.
- Continue to support "Cancer Alley" communities with direct assistance.

Learn more at earthworks.org/formosa



Fjords and Finances

Opposing a Reckless Project

By Ellen Moore

Underwater mine waste disposal is a horrifying yet relatively unknown practice where tailings waste is dumped into the ocean. For nearly a decade, Norwegian fisherfolk, activists and Sámi Indigenous people have been defending fjords from the destructive practice. We are supporting frontline communities and working behind the scenes to target financial backers to undermine financing for new projects. So far, Citigroup, Standard Chartered, and Credit Suisse have implemented policies that prohibit or severely restrict financing for ocean dumping.

To stop the Nussir copper mine, our allies took the fight to the banks of the Repparfjord located on Sámi Indigenous territory in Norway. For months, activists blocked access to the mine site preventing construction. In addition to pressing financial institutions, we worked with allies on an email campaign to the Norwegian Prime Minister responsible for green-lighting the mine.

The Norwegian government approved the Nussir project, which will dump two million metric tonnes of mine waste into the fjord, despite never securing community consent. The fjord and the land surrounding it are integral to Sámi culture and livelihoods, and the mine threatens wildlife and sea-fishing.

THERE'S HOPE

In August, a major European copper company, and one of the major financial backers of the Nussir project, backed out citing concerns about social opposition to the project. We will continue chipping away at destructive projects, educating the public, and naming and shaming funders and bad actors.



Our allies at Young Friends of the Earth Norway. Photo by YFOE.

How we got into the **CLIMATE MESS AND HOW TO GET OUT**

By Raquel Dominguez

Greenwashing Dirty Fuel

Nearly 20 years ago, with the widespread adoption of horizontal hydraulic fracturing, the oil and gas industry tapped into previously unreachable oil and gas reserves ushering in what has been deemed the fracking boom. As the market flooded with new supply, industry sought new markets and a reputation refresh. Bright new advertising campaigns wrapped fracking in the American flag, inflated job creation numbers, and, perhaps worst of all, pushed the lie that “natural” gas was safer and cleaner than other fossil fuels. So began the greenwashing of “natural” gas as a bridge fuel to a renewable energy future.

The undeniable truth, however, is that “natural” gas is mostly methane gas, a pollutant 86x worse for climate than carbon dioxide. The truth is that health-hazardous air toxics, known to cause breathing and heart problems and cancer in frontline communities, are emitted with “natural” gas. The truth is that this gas leaks and is intentionally released at every step of the oil and gas production process—as they say in industry jargon, “from cradle to grave.”

By using terms like “clean burning” and “natural,” oil and gas has greenwashed the truth. The reality is that there’s nothing clean or natural about it. So we’re calling it what it is: methane gas.

In addition to the release of carbon dioxide during the burning of methane, the gas is also released straight into the atmosphere when wells are drilled, when it is compressed into pipelines, and after wells are plugged or abandoned.



Earthworks Texas Field Analyst fellow Jack McDonald, on site in Texas with the optical gas imaging camera.

Our field team has been using infrared optical gas imaging (OGI) since 2014 to prove how prolific methane emissions are during gas extraction. And our efforts are paying off—we’ve worked with countless communities to identify methane leaks from infrastructure, pressured operators, and upgraded regulations. Our work continues.



On August 9th, the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released the first part of its Sixth Assessment Report in advance of the global climate conference in Glasgow (COP26). The report confirms methane gas pollution is increasing, that it is a significant contributor to our climate crisis, and that **action now to reduce methane emissions is essential to slow climate change.**

Time for Action on Methane

The good news is that methane gas is a short-lived climate pollutant, which means it breaks down quickly after about two decades, losing much of its potency to warm the atmosphere. Action today to significantly cut methane pollution could buy us more time to transition our energy system to renewable sources, a shift necessary to avoid climate catastrophe.

What Can President Biden Do?

It will take much more than just the efforts of individual consumers to wean society off of methane and implement new, clean energy technologies.

In the United States, we applauded Congress’ use the Congressional Review Act to reinstate Obama-era methane pollution safeguards.



If methane emissions rapidly decrease, climate change can slow, buying us more time to transition to renewable energy and adapt to the unavoidable effects of the climate crisis.

President Biden has taken some important steps, but also needs to take a much more aggressive posture combatting our climate crisis. The president temporarily paused oil and gas leasing on federal lands, but announced in August that sales

the IPCC report, we renewed our calls for President Biden to use the full power of the Clean Air Act to cut oil and gas methane pollution 65% by 2025 and declare a national emergency on climate to stop fossil fuel expansion.

While we work with the Administration, we will continue to engage with frontline communities to reveal the destruction caused by methane gas.

A Multi-Pronged Approach

Our approach of taking on big industry, working with communities, and demanding action from governmental bodies has yielded big results. With your help, we're exposing the essential truth that so-called natural gas is a dirty fuel and presenting solutions for a clean energy future. We've prompted action from the government, industry, and the wider environmental movement.

With your help, we're exposing the essential truth that so-called natural gas is a dirty fuel.

will resume in 2022. President Biden has not made any move to reinstate the crude oil export ban, despite pressure from frontline groups, Earthworks and allies. Unless the Administration takes steps to immediately reduce methane emissions, all other steps will be band-aid solutions—that is, not solutions at all. In response to



Read about what we need to do for a circular, clean energy economy on page 7

Adapting to climate change...

CAN WE DO IT? The Texas Cold Snap

This past winter, an unprecedented cold snap blew through the south, hitting Texas hard. The unusual weather, spurred by a changing climate, quickly overwhelmed Texas' isolated power grid, which relies almost exclusively on fossil fuels. Hundreds died in the frigid temperatures due to lack of heat and electricity.

Texas officials attempted to blame the power grid failure on renewable energy, deflecting from the real story that fossil fuel production causes climate change and is responsible for increasingly severe weather emergencies such as this one. The state's fossil fuel dependency and isolation from the national grid kept Texas in the dark for days. Key infrastructure froze or broke, actually releasing *more* pollution during the weather event. The severe weather and the state's poor response is a sign of what's to come.

Fossil fuel dependency has gotten us into a climate mess, and surely will not get us out. A new clean energy economy is essential to help us avoid climate change, avoid extreme weather and create a more resilient power grid for when we need it most.

We failed the test. And this is just the beginning of our climate emergency.



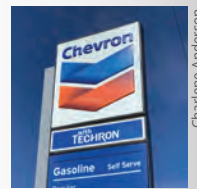


Every year, communities along the *Volta Grande* (Big Bend) of the Xingu River organize canoe trips to draw attention to the challenges facing the peoples of the Xingu and to seek allies in the fight for their rights. Photo: Instituto Socioambiental

shame ON CHEVRON

By Josh Eisenfeld

Oil and gas companies seem to have no qualms about spending millions of dollars trying to convince the public that they are “good guys” in the fight against climate change. Chevron—notorious for their toxic Ecuadorian drilling disaster—is the latest company hard at work greenwashing their image with sleek marketing instead of actually cleaning up their pollution and transitioning to renewable energy solutions.



Charlene Anderson

We're committed to using every available tool to hold the fossil fuel industry accountable for misleading behavior and outright lies.

Chevron's claims are so misleading they've run afoul of the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) “green guides” created to stop companies from making unsubstantiated environmental claims. We are using these rules to challenge Chevron's blatant greenwashing and hold the company accountable.

We asked the FTC to review Chevron's ads. Chevron, one of the world's largest polluters, is using the media to consistently misrepresent its image to appear climate-friendly and socially responsible, while it continues to profit from climate-destroying fossil fuels.

Though we're up against one of the biggest players in the industry, we're making major progress with the FTC, and we'll keep pushing until they penalize Chevron for their misleading and harmful messaging.

Fighting Back AGAINST MINING IN THE AMAZON

By Jan Morrill

A **threat to communities and wildlife.** In Brazil, Earthworks and allies are opposing Canadian mining company Belo Sun's push to develop the country's largest open-pit gold mine in the heart of the Amazon rainforest.

DANGEROUS CONSTRUCTION AND RISK OF FAILURE

Belo Sun's proposed mine would use cyanide to extract gold along the banks of the Xingu River, home to multiple Indigenous communities, and one of the most biodiverse regions in the Amazon, with species like plant-eating piranha and the Xingu dart-poison frog.

A study of the company's plans, commissioned by Amazon Watch, found the tailings (mine waste) dam is not designed to meet seismic safety criteria, in violation of Brazilian law. The review recommended, “based on the high probability of failure of the proposed tailings dam, the *Volta Grande Gold Project* should be rejected by the Brazilian regulatory authorities without further consideration.”



The proposed mine threatens the Amazon rainforest, an important carbon sink, and local communities that never consented to the project.

PUSHING BACK BY HITTING THEIR WALLETS

We are demanding the Ontario Securities and Exchange Commission investigate the misleading statements made by the Canadian Belo Sun and contending “Belo Sun has failed to fully communicate to current and potential investors about the complex nature of its project.”

As the communities and Indigenous Peoples fight for their right to consultation and to protect their land, we will work in solidarity to support their demands.



Learn more about this fight at earthworks.org/brazil



Read about Chevron's actions and our response at earthworks.org/chevron

President Biden's Environmental Efforts Is He Doing Enough?

By Phil Dickieson

Reining in Irresponsible Mining

The 1872 Mining Law perpetuates unjust white colonization of Indigenous resources. It allows mining companies to inflict severe harm on our land, wildlife, sacred sites, tribes, and communities. *The Biden administration has prioritized creating 21st century standards for mineral extraction—a potential first step for reforming the 1872 Mining Law.* Until Congress acts, the Interior Department can take steps to protect communities.

Reducing Methane Emissions

In June, Obama-era standards targeting methane leaks from oil and gas operations were reinstated. While the restoration of the standards is a good first step, the Biden administration must *strengthen* measures and use the Clean Air Act to the fullest extent to cut oil and gas methane pollution by 65% by 2025.

Preparing for Clean Energy

Supply chain disruptions pose serious threats to our economy and would hamper adaptation to new, clean energy technologies. This February, President Biden issued an executive order to facilitate more resilient supply chains.

The executive order calls for a new circular minerals economy and responsible mining so we can responsibly develop, manufacture, and use battery technologies as a replacement for fossil fuels. Check out the graphic below to learn how we can implement a **circular economy**.



Read Earthworks' agenda for the Biden administration at earthworks.org/Biden

A Long Way to Go

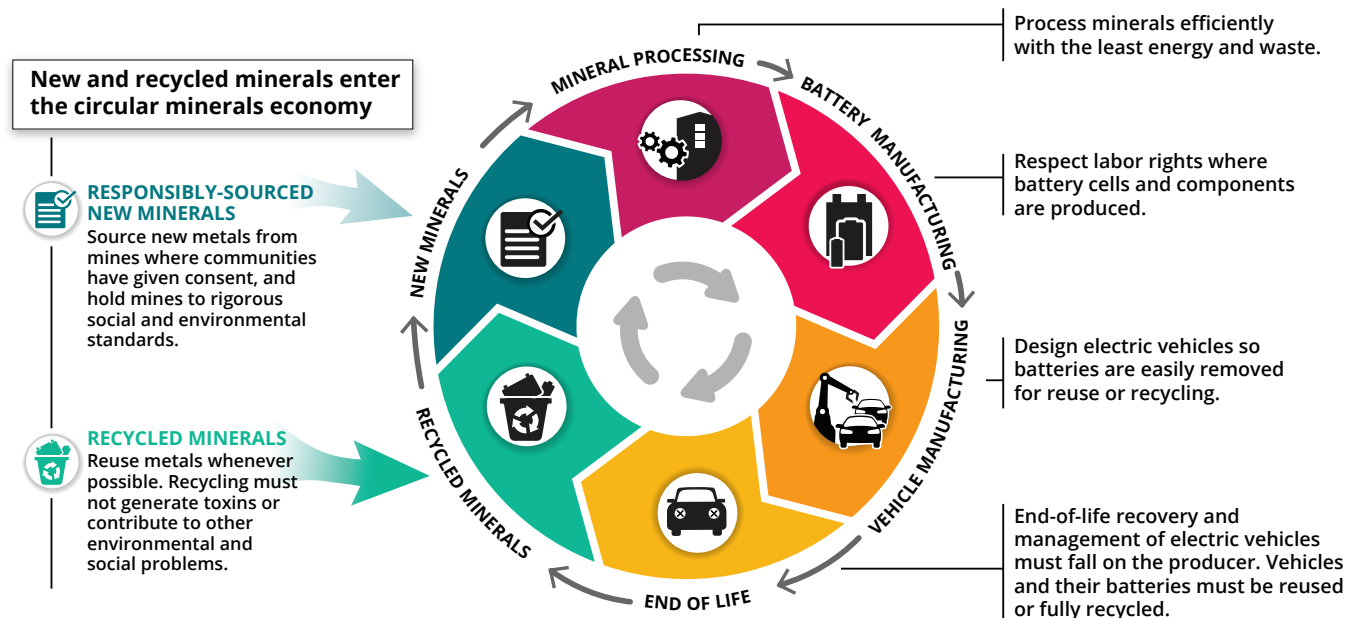
The Biden administration is acknowledging the impacts of renewable energy development—a significant shift from the policies of past presidents on both sides of the aisle. But there's still much more work to be done. President Biden must confront our climate emergency by taking a more aggressive stance on regulating and shutting down the fossil fuel industry. We're calling on President Biden to do what is necessary and what is right—stand up for our communities and our climate to create a renewable future.



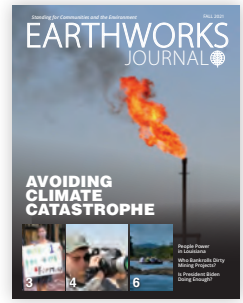
Photo: Frank Fennema / Adobe Stock

How to Get Serious About Sustainable Energy

A CLEAN ENERGY ECONOMY MUST BE CIRCULAR — RE-USE OF MINERALS IS CRITICAL



Earthworks IN THE NEWS



ON THE COVER:
A dirty flare at a gas well site in Texas.

Lower photos, L-R: Allison McCrary, an attorney in New Orleans, attends the Chase Bank demonstration. Photo by Antonia Juhasz. • Earthworks Texas Field Analyst fellow Jack McDonald on site in Texas. • Canoeists on the Xingu River in the Amazon. Photo by Instituto Socioambiental.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION AND SPREAD THE WORD



Most Flares from Texas Permian Oil Drilling Lack Permits

Our bombshell report *Flaring in Texas: A Comprehensive Government Failure* reveals that anywhere from 69% to 84% of flares in the Texas Permian Basin are likely unpermitted — meaning oil producers are releasing untold amounts of climate warming carbon into our atmosphere.

“The oil and gas fields in Texas are just lawless. Even operators who promised to follow the rules, don’t.” — Sharon Wilson, quoted in *Reuters*.



A Climate Time Bomb

Vast amounts of methane being vented into the atmosphere in West Texas were documented and exposed, revealing a massive threat to our earth.

“The Texas regulatory agencies are underfunded, and they are understaffed, and they’re not really motivated. I don’t think that the Biden administration has a realistic picture of what it’s going to take to enforce these methane rules.” — Sharon Wilson, quoted in *Vox*

Read more at earthworks.org/news



Preparing for a clean energy future: Karolo Aparicio

Karolo Aparicio has spent his career working to build a more equitable and sustainable society through his work with EcoViva, International Rivers, and the Bay Area Leads Fund. He joined Earthworks Board of Directors in 2021.



PHOTO: Karolo Aparicio

On getting involved with Earthworks:

“I became acquainted with Earthworks when I was working at International Rivers. That organization works on dams, and it was there that I learned of Earthworks’ work on mine tailings dams. I saw Earthworks’ focus on both mining and energy, and how they put communities at the center of their work. People on the frontlines often get left out of the equation, suffering the impacts of these investments and seeing none of the rewards. The “community first” approach resonates with me.

On bridging the gap between activists, donors, and experts:

“If we are going to say no to extreme oil, we are going to have to pay attention to the minerals needed for powering our future economy. I can help create opportunities for activists and link donors’ values with people who have technical expertise.

On his frontline experiences:

“On a trip to the mining region of El Salvador, I met folks who were working to put an end to metal mining in El Salvador. They wanted clean water rather than polluted water and empty promises. I witnessed firsthand the harmful effects of gold mining. I saw water that looked like anti-freeze and spoke with people who were suffering health problems linked to the chemicals used in mining. It hit me hard.



Learn about the Earthworks board at earthworks.org/board