

Biden Makes Climate Pledge at Glasgow While Pushing Oil, Gas Leasing in U.S.

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U.S. climate groups slammed the Biden administration today for ignoring climate impacts and refusing to stop oil and gas leasing on public lands despite President Biden’s Glasgow pledge to halve greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The revised plans for February lease sales in seven western states, [announced](#) this week by the Bureau of Land Management, defer some acres to protect imperiled species but none for climate mitigation.

Groups filed formal [objections](#) to the plans in October, urging the administration to prevent additional climate pollution and harm to land, water, communities and endangered species by deferring or prohibiting new leases. The administration originally proposed to offer 734,000 acres of public lands for oil and gas leasing but has removed about 383,000 acres of greater sage grouse habitat in Wyoming.

“Just as it has the authority to stop leasing to protect imperiled species, the Biden administration has authority to stop leasing to protect our imperiled climate,” said Taylor McKinnon at the Center for Biological Diversity. “The administration’s refusal to halt fossil fuel expansion on federal lands and waters makes a mockery of the U.S. climate mission in Glasgow.”

The Biden administration has approved 3,091 new drilling permits. That rate of 332 per month outpaces the Trump administration’s 300 permits per month in fiscal years 2018-2020.

“While strong language from the Biden administration recognizing the urgency of the climate crisis is welcome, words alone offer little reprieve to the people and communities who are already acutely experiencing climate impacts,” said Kyle Tisdell with Western Environmental Law Center. “It is time for action to mirror the rhetoric, and such action must begin with managing the end of fossil fuel exploitation on public lands and waters.”

The drilling permits and new leasing, primarily in Wyoming and Colorado, come despite Biden's January [pause](#) on new oil and gas leasing pending a review of the program. A June court order lifted the leasing pause but retained the administration's authority over federal oil and gas.

"Candidate Biden promised to ban new leasing on public lands and waters, but President Biden is sacrificing hundreds of thousands of acres of public lands to the oil and gas industry," said Nicole Ghio, senior fossil fuels program manager at Friends of the Earth US. "Biden has the legal authority to do the right thing for the climate and future generations. With climate negotiations underway in Glasgow, it's time for him to show courage by standing up to Big Oil and stopping these lease sales."

Renewed [IPCC](#) warnings and several [analyses](#) show that climate pollution from the world's already-producing oil, gas and coal developments would push warming past 1.5 degrees Celsius. One analysis, by the [International Energy Agency](#), shows that limiting warming to 1.5 degrees requires ending new investment in fossil fuel projects.

"While President Biden is talking a good talk on climate action, the reality is his administration is actively working to fan the flames of the climate crisis by selling more public lands for fracking," said Jeremy Nichols, climate and energy program director for WildEarth Guardians. "This isn't just hypocritical, it's outright deceitful and it truly calls into question whether the Biden administration's climate agenda is nothing but broken promises."

"While President Biden promoted climate action in Glasgow, he was also allowing fracking to expand on lands that belong to the American people," said Barb Gottlieb at Physicians for Social Responsibility. "This is bad for the climate, bad for human health and bad for trust in his administration."

"In the face of BLM's own projection of \$360 million to \$7 billion in social cost of carbon emissions that will result, and despite its COP26 proclamations, the Biden administration has chosen to restart aggressive oil and gas leasing of our public lands," said Kate Hudson, Western U.S. advocacy coordinator for Waterkeeper Alliance. "Our frontline and Native American communities, our western waterways and our planet will pay the price."

"Leasing hundreds of thousands of acres to be drilled by the oil and gas industry in the midst of climate emergency is an unfathomable betrayal by the Biden administration," said Collin Rees, senior campaigner at Oil Change International. "It's doubly hypocritical during the ongoing climate talks in Glasgow, where the U.S. is desperately trying to portray itself as a global climate leader. Until President Biden stops this fossil fuel expansion that we can't afford, his words on climate ring hollow."

Last month nearly 700 people were arrested in Washington, D.C., after [calling](#) on President Biden to declare a climate emergency and stop new federal fossil fuel leasing and permitting.

In April more than 200 groups filed [comments](#) with the administration, demanding a formal climate review of the federal fossil fuel programs under the National Environmental Policy Act, Federal Lands Policy Management Act, Endangered Species Act and other laws.

In January 574 climate, conservation, Indigenous, religious and business groups [sent](#) then-President-elect Biden text for a proposed [executive order](#) to ban new fossil fuel leasing and permitting on federal public lands and waters.

Background

Fossil fuel production on public lands [causes](#) about a quarter of U.S. greenhouse gas pollution. Peer-reviewed science [estimates](#) that a nationwide federal fossil fuel leasing ban would reduce carbon emissions by 280 million tons per year, ranking it among the most ambitious federal climate policy proposals in recent years.

Oil, gas and coal extraction uses mines, well pads, gas lines, roads and other infrastructure that destroys habitat for wildlife, including threatened and endangered species. Oil spills and other harms from offshore drilling have done immense damage to ocean wildlife and coastal communities. Fracking and mining also pollute watersheds and waterways that provide drinking water to millions of people.

Federal fossil fuels that have not been leased to industry [contain](#) up to 450 billion tons of potential climate pollution; those already leased to industry contain up to 43 billion tons. Pollution from the world's already producing oil and gas fields, if fully developed, would push global warming well past 1.5 degrees Celsius.

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