



The mission of DRC is to promote sustainable use of natural resources, and family owned and operated agriculture, by building enduring, democratic local groups that empower people to influence decision-making processes that affect their lives and communities.

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ND Groups Urge North Dakota Industrial Commission to Get Serious on Flaring

DAKOTA RESOURCE COUNCIL ENVIRONMENTAL LAW & POLICY CENTER DACOTAH CHAPTER OF SIERRA CLUB

BISMARCK, ND – Members and staff of Dakota Resource Council (DRC), Dacotah Chapter of Sierra Club and the Environmental Law and Policy Center (ELPC) held a news conference on the steps of the ND State Capitol Building this morning, September 21, urging members of the North Dakota Industrial Commission (NDIC) to “get tough” on the issue of natural gas flaring in North Dakota’s oil fields. The NDIC is set to meet this coming Thursday, September 25, to discuss a request from the North Dakota Petroleum Council to delay the state’s Gas Flaring Policy benchmarks for another two years.

At the news conference, Mindi Schmitz, Government Relations Specialist, of the Environmental Law and Policy Center presented findings of a six-month study from ELPC detailing the efficacy of the NDIC Gas Flaring Policy since its inception. The study found that drilling has remained steady and new permits are still being issued, without gas capture plans, a violation of the Gas Flaring Policy. According to ND Department of Mineral Resources (DMR) data, 3,258 wells are required to have gas capture plans. 1,705 of those wells are on “Confidential Status” and no public information is available as to the amount of flaring from those wells. But of the 1553 wells whose information is available to the public, 463 wells (29.8%) are without filed gas capture plans and are blatantly non-compliant. But to-date, no action has been taken by the NDIC or the DMR to bring these 463 wells into compliance.

Schmitz said of the study, “Of the files we were able to review a third didn’t have a gas capture plan. This is alarming because those plans were meant to be the first step in slowing the loss of significant revenue from the waste of our natural resources, and instead it looks like we’re just spinning our tires in the sand.”

Dakota Resource Council and Sierra Club conducted a public opinion poll earlier this year that showed North Dakotans want oil companies held accountable for wasting this irreplaceable North Dakota resource. The poll was conducted by UND’s College of Business and Public Administration. Results showed 64% of respondents think oil companies are flaring off more gas than they should and 58% support withholding drilling permits until the oil company has in place the means to capture the gas.

Wayde Schafer, Conservation Organizer for the Dacotah Chapter of Sierra Club said, “The last thing North Dakotans want is a delay in reducing flaring in the Bakken! And the polling data backs that up. The Gas Flaring Policy should be what North Dakotans want, not what oil companies want. It’s time our leaders got tough with industry and stay serious on flaring.”

Dakota Resource Council member Corrine Redmond, a rancher who traveled from Tioga to attend the news conference said, “There is waste occurring in North Dakota at a threefold rate! Natural gas is being wasted and it is a nonrenewable energy source; gas is being wasted as a financial loss to school districts, townships, counties, the state, and mineral owners; wasted at the cost to our once pristine prairie land. We continue to allow these companies to self-regulate at the expense of North Dakota citizens.”

Speaking from her home in Belfield, DRC Chair Linda Weiss said, “Delaying the Gas Flaring Policy for another two years feels like we’re sliding backwards and racing to the bottom. If the “normal” for the oil and gas industry is 1% of gas flared nationally, why isn’t ND racing towards that goal? North Dakota has always been a leader in energy, and we should be setting the standard by providing a strong example to other states. We’re just going to fall even further behind and more gas will be needlessly wasted.”

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ATTACHMENT(2): Letter to NDIC; ELPC Study Fact Sheet

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