

# Texas oil lobby says EPA air-quality plan could stifle production in the Permian Basin

*The Environmental Protection Agency has stepped up monitoring in the nation's most productive oil field to see if greenhouse gas emissions need to be curtailed.*



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Corpus Christi Caller Times

AUSTIN — Texas' largest oil lobby is mounting a grassroots effort designed to pressure the Environmental Protection Agency from implementing new air pollution regulations in the Texas-New Mexico Permian Basin, where 40% of the nation's traditional energy sources are mined.

The Texas Oil and Gas Association, or TXOGA, on Tuesday distributed an electronic pamphlet titled "Keep drilling in the Permian" warning of a proposal that would require the state to develop a federally approved plan for meeting air quality standards in portions of the nation's most productive region for oil and gas production. The pamphlet urges Texans to contact the EPA to raise objections to the planned action in the Permian Basin.

TXOGA, founded in 1919 when Texas was gaining national dominance in oil and gas production, said operators in the Permian are already "focused on lowering emissions" in the basin that the U.S. Energy Information Administration on Monday said is expected to set a record in October by producing more than 5.4 million barrels of crude per day.

"The EPA should recognize this and stop interfering with our energy security by developing crippling and unnecessary regulations on Permian oil and natural gas production," TXOGA said in the publication.

In August, the EPA announced it was conducting "helicopter flyovers" over the Permian in both Texas and New Mexico so infrared cameras could survey drilling operations for emissions of methane and volatile organic compounds. The flyovers came after the EPA's announcement in the spring that it is considering imposing the new air quality steps for Texas.

"By using helicopter surveillance, EPA can assess a large geographic area and survey operations from thousands of oil and gas operations in the basin," the federal agency said. "When the infrared camera detects hydrocarbon emissions during a flyover, a technician onboard the helicopter will note the time, GPS location and other information about the emissions source."

The EPA said it will use data it collects "to identify the facility that released" the excess greenhouse emissions and then initiate enforcement actions.

The oil and gas lobby group is piggybacking on a letter Texas Gov. Greg Abbott sent to President Joe Biden late last month warning that new regulations "would jeopardize 25 percent of our nation's gasoline supply." Abbott also contended the EPA was using "flawed" data and that some of the pollutants picked up by the flyovers likely originated in Mexico and wafted north to the Permian Basin.

"Of course, the dearth of logic and data to support the administration's position has little to do with process and procedure," Abbott said in his letter. "It is grounded in your desire to eliminate oil and gas production in Texas. As you said during your campaign, 'I guarantee you, we're going to end fossil fuels.'"

According to a report published Tuesday in the industry trade journal Crude Oil Prices Today, the Permian Basin is powering a national energy boom that has picked up steam since the COVID-19 pandemic began to recede. National production has reached 11.8 million barrels per day, the highest since April 2020, the report said.

"That's still below the record-high rate of production U.S. drillers had reached right before the pandemic struck but a significant recovery from the pandemic collapse in production," the publication said.

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