



Citizens' Climate Lobby

Contra Costa County Chapter

[View Online](#)

Newsletter – December 2019

The Smoking Gun



DCP Pegasus Gas Processing Plant

Here, methane escapes from a device
meant to be burning it off.

Immense amounts of methane are escaping from oil and gas sites nationwide, worsening global warming, even as the Trump administration weakens restrictions on offenders. Jonah M. Kessel and Hiroko Tabuchi from *The New York Times* documented major releases of methane from West Texas oilfields using a highly specialized camera that can photograph methane.

The *Times* journalists first detected methane plumes from a tiny plane, crammed with scientific equipment, circling above the oil and gas sites that dot the Permian Basin, an oil field bigger than Kansas. In just a few hours, they identified six “super emitters” with unusually high methane emissions, ranging from about 300 pounds to almost 1,100 pounds per hour. In [a 2017 study of the Barnett shale basin](#) in Texas, sites releasing 60 pounds or more of methane per hour were classified as super emitters. These make up just 1% of sites but account for nearly half of total emissions.

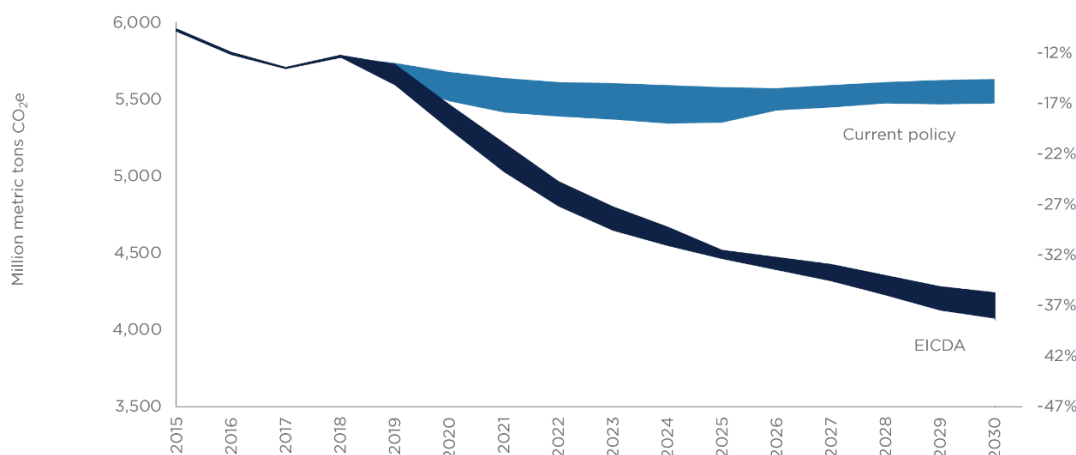
After their flight, the reporters drove to the sites armed with infrared video gear that revealed methane billowing from tanks, seeping from pipes and wafting from bright flares that are designed to burn off the gas, but sometimes fail to do so completely. **The videos, which can**

be seen in the [Times article](#), are stunning in their intensity. They are difficult to deny. Nevertheless, employees of the gas plants had no problems doing so, questioning the accuracy of the reporters' assessments and assumptions and calling the leaks "just water vapor".

Operators of the sites identified have lobbied the Trump administration, either directly or through trade organizations, to weaken regulations on methane. These local companies, along with lobby groups that represent the world's largest energy companies, are fighting rules that would force them to more aggressively fix emissions like these. Next year, the administration could move forward with [a plan that would effectively eliminate requirements](#) that oil companies install technology to detect and fix methane leaks from oil and gas facilities. By the E.P.A.'s own calculations, the rollback would increase methane emissions by 370,000 tons through 2025, enough to power more than a million homes for a year.

An Assessment of the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act

Figure 1: US economy-wide net GHG emissions, 2015-2030



Source: Rhodium Group analysis

HR 763, the [Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act](#) (EICDA), was introduced in the House of Representatives in January 2019 by lead sponsor Ted Deutch (D-FL). The proposal derived from the [Carbon Fee and Dividend policy](#) advocated for nearly a decade by Citizen's Climate Lobby. In November 2019, the Center on Global Energy Policy ([CGEP](#)) at Columbia University and the Rhodium Group [published](#) a study that assessed the potential impacts of EICDA on the US energy system, environment and economy. The study concluded that, under the EICDA:

- **Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions decline substantially.** The chart above shows that, compared to 2005 levels, implementing EICDA as a stand-alone policy leads to economy-wide net GHG emissions reductions of 32–33% by 2025 and 36–38% by 2030. These reductions exceed the US commitments to the Paris Agreement. Most of the near-term emission reductions occur in the power sector, where emissions fall 82–84% by 2030.
 - **Air pollution also declines.** Sulfur dioxide (SO₂) and mercury emissions from power plants decline by more than 95% and emissions of oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) decline by about 75% by 2030 relative to a current policy scenario.
 - **Electricity generation shifts to cleaner sources.** The price on carbon causes the US economy to shift from carbon-intensive energy sources to low- and zero-carbon energy sources. Coal is nearly eliminated from the power sector by 2030, with solar, wind, nuclear and natural gas with carbon capture and storage all providing significantly larger generation shares compared to a current policy scenario.
 - **Energy prices rise but do not skyrocket.** EICDA causes national average gasoline prices to increase by about 12 cents per gallon in 2020 and 90 cents per gallon in 2030. National average electricity prices increase by about 1 and 3 cents per kilowatt hour in 2020 and 2030, respectively.
 - **The carbon dividend cushions energy price impacts.** On average, the carbon dividend payments generated by EICDA are comparable to the increases in energy expenditures caused by EICDA. Average low- and middle-income households benefit because they receive more in dividends than they pay in increased economy-wide prices for goods and services resulting from the carbon fee.
-

Where the Democratic Candidates Stand on Climate Change



An article by the staff of *Inside Climate News* provides individual [in-depth looks](#) at the attitudes of most of the Democratic presidential candidates. It is a useful resource for those of us who prioritize action on the climate crisis. All Democratic candidates want to prevent/minimize climate change and defend against its ravages but they have different approaches. The article also reviews Donald Trump's disturbing record on climate change.

UN Climate Talks Stymied by Carbon Markets' 'Ghost from the Past'

Greta Thunberg
Named Time Magazine's Person of the Year

DOUBLE ISSUE

DEC. 23 / DEC. 30, 2019

PERSON *of the* YEAR TIME

**GRETA
THUNBERG**

THE POWER
OF YOUTH



time.com

GretaThunberg, the teen activist from Sweden who has urged immediate action to address a global climate crisis, has been named *Time Magazine's* person of the year for 2019. She is the [youngest person](#) to have ever received the accolade. Thunberg, 16, was lauded

by *Time* for starting an environmental campaign in August 2018 which became a global movement, initially skipping school and camping out in front of the Swedish parliament to demand action.

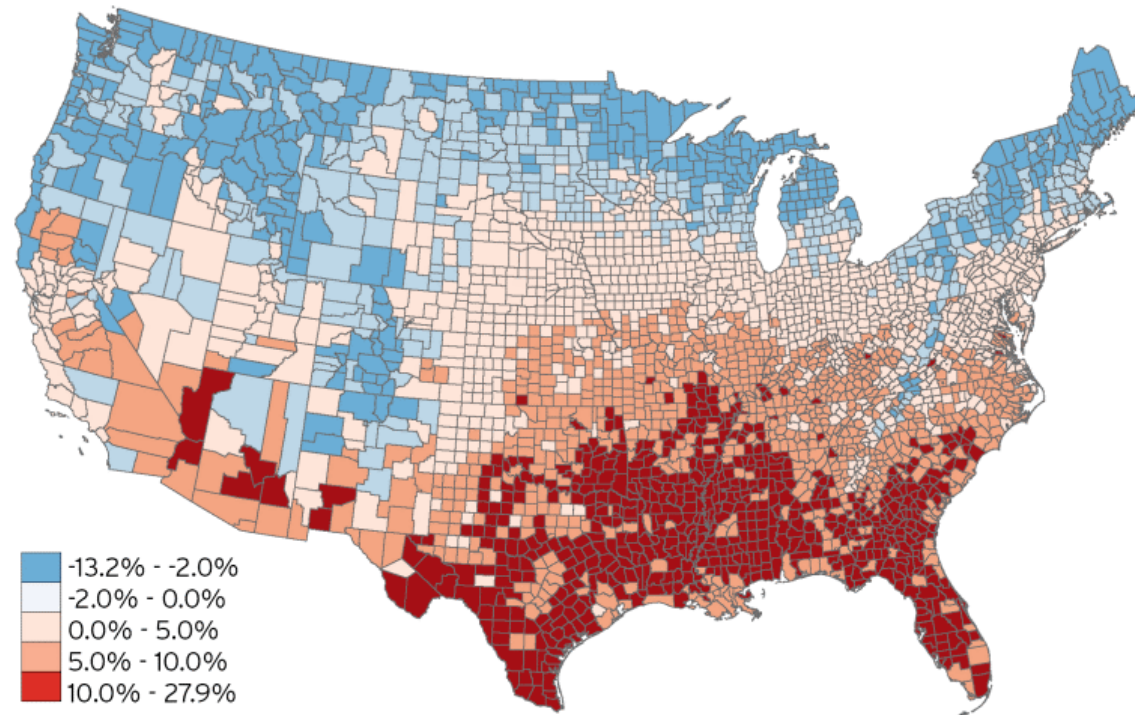
Some of the [reasons for Time Magazine's choice](#): In the 16 months since, she has addressed heads of state at the UN, met with the pope, sparred with the president of the United States and inspired 4 million people to join the global climate strike on September 20, 2019, in what was the largest climate demonstration in human history. Margaret Atwood [compared her to Joan of Arc](#). After noticing a hundredfold increase in its usage, lexicographers at Collins Dictionary named Thunberg's pioneering idea, climate strike, the [word of the year](#).

Former Vice President Al Gore, a longtime environmentalist, [praised](#) the magazine's decision: "Greta embodies the moral authority of the youth activist movement demanding that we act immediately to solve the climate crisis. She is an inspiration to me and to people across the world."

How the Geography of Climate Damage Could Make the Politics Less Polarizing

Climate-related costs by 2080-2099

Share of 2012 county income



Note: Emissions projections are based on a "business-as-usual" scenario (RCP8.5), which reflects the current global trajectory

Source: Hsiang and others, 2017

B Metropolitan Policy Program
at BROOKINGS

The standard story is that the high-tech "blue" states are pushing a green wave of massive investment to cut emissions of gases that cause climate change, [write](#) Mark Muro, David Victor and Jacob Whiton of the *Brookings Institution*. Meanwhile, GOP-leaning "red" states are assumed to be part of a "[brown blockade](#)" of fossil-fuel producers that are drilling and burning and don't want to stop. The upshot: [Emissions divides](#) appear to guarantee a future of climate policy gridlock, even as [scientific consensus](#) signals an emergency and [new data](#) shows the rate of planetary warming is accelerating.

But what if we look at the geography of climate change impacts instead of emissions? Perhaps the current gridlock might not be as permanent as it now seems, as many of the jurisdictions with political leaders opposed to climate policy are the most exposed to the harms of climate change.

The figure above projects climate damage as a percentage of income for US counties during the period 2080 - 2099. Climate change and its economic impacts are widespread, but the impacts are highly uneven in their distribution. Reddish tones depict damage while bluish tones indicate economic benefits from climate change. Most of the variation reflects variation in mortality. Another big source of variation is agriculture, where parts of the country see big

harm from heat while others benefit from longer growing seasons and changes in rainfall. For coastal impacts, the biggest harm is to the southeast, from hurricanes and sea-level rise.

The map shows climate change could actually bestow net economic benefits (blue-shaded areas) on the Pacific Northwest, parts of the Interior West, the upper Midwest and New England, even as it creates stark losses (up to 28% of income) in the Southwest, Southeast and Florida. These patterns suggest that many red-voting states in the “brown barricade” are likely to be disproportionately exposed to climate change’s negative impacts.

In much of the country, Republicans are voting for people who are opposed to climate policy, even as they are most exposed to climate impacts. These and other data in the article suggest that federal action to curb economically harmful climate change does not resonate in the places that need it most. What does all of this say about the future of US policy on climate change? The “brown blockade” may break down as more people become aware that [acute climate impacts are already happening](#).

QUICK NEWS

- **2020 CCL Northern California Regional Conference to be held in Oakland in January.** CCL’s Regional Conference is an opportunity for newcomers and experienced CCL members to learn, to practice skills, to inspire each other and to strategize on moving our country toward climate solutions. The meeting is on January 18th – 19th, 8:30 am - 6:30 pm Saturday and 8:30 am - 12:30 pm Sunday, at Oakland Technical High School, 4351 Broadway. Regular tickets are \$80 and include food; tickets for college/university students and people under 25 are \$10; tickets for high schoolers are free. Click [here](#) for registration and information about housing, parking and transportation. Click [here](#) to see a draft of the conference program.
- **GM venture to create Ohio battery plant and 1,100 jobs.** Neal E. Boudette of *The New York Times* [wrote](#) that General Motors, along with South Korean partner LG Chem, will build a factory to make electric-vehicle batteries in Lordstown, Ohio, creating more than 1,000 jobs. They plan to invest \$2.3 billion in a joint venture that would lower battery costs and make GM’s electric vehicles (EVs) more cost-competitive with gas cars and other EVs. “We think as we do this in a joint fashion it is going to accelerate our ability to win in the electric vehicle space,” said GM’s chief executive, Mary Barra. GM’s major push into EVs includes 20 battery-powered models by 2023. It aims to sell 1 million EVs globally by 2026.

- **EU leaders commit to carbon neutrality by 2050.** [According to](#) Samuel Petrequin and Raf Casert of the *Associated Press*, European Union (EU) leaders have claimed a deal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, sidestepping the objections of Poland, one of the bloc's biggest economies. EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said Poland could have more time to "go through details, but this will not change the time frame." Poland's Prime Minister, Mateusz Morawiecki, insisted that "Poland has been exempted from the principle of reaching climate neutrality (by 2050)," saying "We will reach it at our own pace." Coal-dependent nations like Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic face heavy costs associated with transforming their economy and energy sources.

CCL-CCC Chapter: Recent Accomplishments

- **Cynthia Mahoney** joined environmentalists at **Toyota's headquarters** in San Ramon on November 21 and at the **Moscone Center** in San Francisco on December 1 to **protest** [automakers' support](#) of the Trump administration's plan to **roll back vehicle mileage standards**. **Michael Kent** joined Cynthia at the Moscone Center protest.
- **Milt Latta** joined students and other environmentalists at the [UC Berkeley Climate Strike](#) on December 6 to support a **UC Green New Deal**. Milt also committed to **installing solar panels** at his house in Lafayette.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Next CCL Contra Costa chapter meeting: Monday, January 13**, at 6:30 pm at St. Anselm's Episcopal Church, 682 Michael Lane, Lafayette.
- **CCL Northern California Regional Meeting** at Oakland Technical High School, 4551 Broadway, Oakland, **January 18-19**. Click [here](#) to learn more.
- Contra Costa County **Women's March, January 18**, at Civic Park. Walnut Creek. The rally is at 10:30 am and the march begins at 11:15 am. Click [here](#) for more information.

Best Wishes for a Healthy New Year with Progress on Climate Change!

Ask Us to Activate Your Group with a Climate Change Presentation

Presentations by CCL members are an effective way to educate people about climate change and about how a Carbon Fee and Dividend policy can combat the problem. To

arrange for a 15- to 50-minute presentation, please contact Cynthia Mahoney at cam8ross@comcast.net.

Find out more about our work. Join a CCL introductory call any Wednesday at 5:00 pm PT. Just [click here](#) for details

Newsletter Editors: Doug Merrill and Betty Lobos

Want to find out more about our local activities and meetings? Email the CCL Contra Costa chapter at CCLContraCosta@gmail.com or visit our [Facebook page](#).