

THE DAILY CALLER

Obama Will Clamp Down On Fracking — To Reduce Global Warming 0.004 Degrees Celsius

Michael Bastach

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President Barack Obama and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will clamp down even more on methane emissions from oil and natural gas wells as part of a broader effort to tackle global warming.

Obama's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will now begin crafting rules to regulate methane from hundreds of thousands of oil and gas wells already in operation despite not having finalized rules for wells not yet drilled, according to The Wall Street Journal. EPA plans to release a draft rule in April to give companies hints of the technologies they will have to install to be able to stay in business.

“Our countries are stepping up to the challenge of methane emissions, and driving forward the regulatory measures necessary to curb methane emissions from existing oil and gas sources,” Brian Deese, senior adviser to Obama, told The WSJ.

The EPA has been working on rules to clamp down on methane for years, despite the fact that existing voluntary programs and new technologies are causing methane emissions from natural gas operations to plummet even as production has increased.

EPA's own data shows methane emissions have fallen 13 percent from 2011 to 2014. Not only that, emissions from hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, fell 81 percent from 2012 to 2014.

Recent research suggests EPA has been underreporting methane emissions, but the trend is still downward as fracking operations become more efficient and capture more methane released from extracting shale gas.

Obama and Trudeau announced a plan to reduce methane emissions 40 to 45 percent by 2025. It's a commitment Obama has already made, but it has the oil industry worried about new regulatory costs at a time when low crude prices have many companies facing financial ruin.

Trudeau joining Obama in announcing new regulations on oil and gas wells signals a shift in U.S.-Canadian relations. Obama was in constant conflict with Canada's conservative former Prime Minister Stephen Harper over energy policy, not least of all the president's refusal to approve the Keystone XL oil pipeline.

Trudeau is much more concerned about global warming and wants to work with Obama on the issue. Indeed, Trudeau has already banned oil tanker exports from British Columbia in an effort to derail a controversial pipeline project.

Obama's announcement, however, comes after the Supreme Court halted the implementation of the EPA's so-called Clean Power Plan — the lynchpin of Obama's pledge to the United Nations to cut greenhouse gas emissions 26 to 28 percent by 2025.

Obama's move against methane could be a way to salvage his credibility on global warming with the international community before the U.N. climate deal, agreed to in Paris last year, is formally signed in April.

But even if Obama's new methane regulations are implemented, they won't likely have any meaningful impact on projected global warming. Climate scientists with the libertarian Cato Institute previously estimated Obama's methane plan would stem just 0.002 degrees Celsius of projected warming by 2100.

Steve Everley of the industry-backed Energy In Depth applied Cato's analysis to Obama's new proposal and incorporated updated methane measurements. Everley found Obama's plan would lead to "0.004 degrees Celsius, or four one-thousandths of one degree, of avoided warming by the year 2100."