



April 16, 2020

*Submitted via email*

Garry Kaufman, Director  
Air Pollution Control Division  
4300 Cherry Creek Drive South  
Denver, Colorado 80246  
[garrison.kaufman@state.co.us](mailto:garrison.kaufman@state.co.us)

Jeff Robbins, Director  
Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission  
1120 Lincoln Street, Suite 801  
Denver, Colorado 80203  
[jeff.robbsins@state.co.us](mailto:jeff.robbsins@state.co.us)

**Re: Request for at Least a 60-day Suspension of Permitting to Protect Public Health from Oil & Gas Pollution During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Dear Directors Kaufman and Robbins:

In light of the unprecedented global coronavirus pandemic, WildEarth Guardians formally requests that the Air Pollution Control Division (APCD) and the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) suspend approval of any and all pending air pollution permits and oil and gas permits, including permits to drill, location assessments, permits to recompleat existing wells, and requests to vent or flare. Because of the severe threat posed by COVID-19, Coloradans must focus on keeping themselves and their families safe. Citizens do not have the capacity to meaningfully engage in public comment periods. Furthermore, Colorado should not be approving new sources of air pollution during a public health crisis.

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, many Coloradans were already suffering unhealthy levels of air pollution largely because of oil and gas development in the state. Along the Front Range, oil and gas activity has pushed concentrations of ground-level ozone to dangerous highs and threatened communities with hazardous air pollutants. Many Coloradans now suffer from respiratory diseases including asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. As reports are now finding, these diseases put Coloradans at a higher risk of death from COVID-19.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Lisa Friedman, New Research Links Air Pollution to Higher Coronavirus Death Rates, New York Times, Apr. 7, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/07/climate/air-pollution-coronavirus-covid.html> (last visited April 16, 2020).

On March 10, 2020, the Governor of Colorado declared a public health emergency. Since March 25, 2020, all Coloradans have been under a stay-at-home order in order to limit the spread of COVID-19.<sup>2</sup> The citizens of Colorado are making incredible sacrifices to limit the spread of the disease.

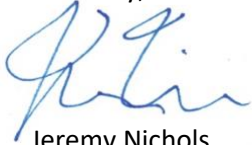
Unfortunately, we do not see these same sacrifices being made by the oil and gas industry. Both the APCD and the COGCC have indicated that they will continue permitting new sources of pollution under a business as usual approach. As of today, 15 new oil and gas air pollution permits are open for public comment on the APCD's website.<sup>3</sup> At the COGCC, more than 90 new permits to drill are currently open for public comment, and thousands of additional oil and gas well drilling permits are closed to public comment but are listed as pending.<sup>4</sup>

We understand both agencies desire to maintain business as usual. However, let's be real. Our world is anything but business as usual right now as every Coloradan and every American is making unprecedented sacrifices to help weather our health crisis and ensure that health comes first. Pausing the permitting of new sources of air pollution is in keeping with our collective need to do our part to limit the spread of the coronavirus and flatten the infection rate curve.

Coloradans rightfully concerned over the health and environmental impacts of more oil and gas extraction deserve a break. All of us are focused on safeguarding our health, dealing with sick friends and family, and protecting our communities. It is not appropriate at this time to burden the public with having to track, weigh in, and meaningfully engage in the APCD and COGCC permitting processes.

APCD and COGCC have the authority to suspend processing permits given the unprecedented health crisis and the statewide declarations of emergency. During this time of crisis, it is Colorado's public health--not the oil and gas industry's bottomline--that is paramount. As a result, we urge APCD and COGCC to take action to protect public health and institute at least a 60-day moratorium on all permitting of new oil and gas sources.

Sincerely,



Jeremy Nichols  
Climate and Energy Program Director  
WildEarth Guardians  
2590 Walnut St.  
Denver, CO 80205  
(303) 437-7663  
[jnichols@wildearthguardians.org](mailto:jnichols@wildearthguardians.org)

---

<sup>2</sup> Gov. Polis Announces Statewide Stay-At-Home Order, Provides Update on Colorado Response to COVID-19, Mar. 25, 2020, <https://www.colorado.gov/governor/news/gov-polis-announces-statewide-stay-home-order-provides-update-colorado-response-covid-19> (last visited Apr. 16, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> APCD, Air Permit Public Notices, <https://www.colorado.gov/cdphe/air-permit-public-notice> (last visited Apr. 16, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> COGCC, Pending Permits, All Pending Permits, <https://cogcc.state.co.us/permits.html#/permits> (last visited Apr. 16, 2020).