

Clare Gallagher
Methane Testimony

RE: Midterm Report on the Statewide Hydrocarbon Emission Reduction Stakeholder Process

Good morning Chairman Butler and members of the Colorado Air Quality Control Commission. My name is Clare Gallagher, and I am a professional trail runner. I grew up right here in Cherry Creek, and I currently call Boulder home. I started learning about earth science in college, where I focused my research on the damage that climate change is doing to coral reefs. Now living back home in landlocked Colorado, it's not hard to notice the impacts that climate change is having on our trails and forests and public lands, too.

You may wonder how climate change impacts someone who makes their living as a trail runner, and the reality is that rising temperatures impact us in many different ways. The most obvious is wildfire, and that's what I'm going to focus on today.

As temperatures continue to rise, wildfires are projected to burn more land, and unfortunately, the West is warming at a faster rate than the rest of the country. Already, the fire season is two months longer than in the early 1970s. In addition, fires are burning hotter and larger: in the 1980s, the West saw 140 fires larger than 1,000 acres, and the 2000s, we saw approximately 250.

Does wildfire have an impact on the outdoor recreation economy? You bet. It's not just about trail runners, it's about hikers, backpackers, mountain bikers, horse packers, jeep drivers-- all of us that use trails, forests, roads, and campgrounds.

So, not only do local communities suffer when trails close to the public (as no one needs lodging, food, or gas), but large races and sporting events must be cancelled due to the concern around poor air quality from wildfire smoke or due to damaged or closed trails. This year, California cancelled four major races as a result of the Camp Fire.

Here in Colorado, the San Juan National Forest implemented a forest-wide closure prohibiting entry into the forest for the first time ever due to the severity of the 416 Fire. There is no doubt this impacted business in Durango and surrounding communities. Frank Lockwood, the Executive Director of the Durango Area Tourism Office said visitors started to cancel reservations upon the news of the closure, cutting business by 15-20%. The Durango Herald reported a month-long closure would result in a \$33 million-dollar economic loss. According to the Forest Service, more than 1.5 million people visit the San Juan each year, with most visits happening in the summer. And most parties spend at least \$700 in the community. You don't have to do the math to see how 15-20% revenue cut at \$700 per party could multiply quickly.

And if you violated this order and chose to trespass on your public lands, that you in part own, as a taxpayer? You could face a \$5,000 fine, imprisonment of up to six months, or both. Just

think-- our federal government is threatening people who access their beloved public lands with six months of imprisonment all because of our changing climate. Yes, I understand the point is public safety, but really, let's think about the severity of what's happening here.

Okay, I got on a little rant there. All this to say-- climate change has a massive impact on the outdoor recreation economy and our treasured public lands, and we know that methane is an immensely potent climate-driving greenhouse gas. I am proud to be a citizen of a state that led the nation in limiting methane emissions from oil and gas operations, and I want to see my home state continue leadership in this regard.

Part of the 2017 rulemaking included the development of a stakeholder process. Though I respect the parameters created for that engagement, I ask you to also consider the 71% of Coloradans-- that's nearly 4 million of us-- that participate in outdoor recreation each year, pumping \$28 billion into our state's economy. I urge you to act on climate and mitigate methane emissions to ensure the future and prosperity of outdoor recreation in our great state. Thank you.