

Letter on risks of oil drilling was ludicrous

Bill Perry's Feb. 26 letter contains so many errors that corrections are necessary.

After record spending by President Obama's Environmental Protection Agency, Perry's contention, "oil production threatens the air we breathe and the water we drink," is ludicrous. Perry mentions methane and contends ozone pollution contributes to adverse health effects, but, according to Wikipedia, "Tropospheric ozone ... initiates the chemical removal of methane and other hydrocarbons from the atmosphere."

Perry contends a methane hot spot is over Farmington, but is ignorant of what the original data really say. Methane is swamp gas and the methane concentrations posted online by the University of Bremen clearly show methane hot spots over swamps of Louisiana, Virginia, Columbia, Africa, Thailand, and China, but not over New Mexico.

Only after some creative mathematics, by Kort, et al, in October 2014's Geophysical Research Letters, by adding back the methane lost in the stratosphere, can the "huge methane hot spot in the American Southwest" be made to appear.

Make no mistake, there were significant leaks in northwest New Mexico; an air and ground measurements campaign found many, but, from the subsequent PNAS report, two pipeline leaks were reported to operators, which shut the lines down "the next day." For other leaks, similar reports were made to the state of New Mexico. The authors note a "heavy-tail flux distribution," meaning 66 percent of the leaked gas volume came from 10 percent of the leaks. So, while in 2014 there were leaks in northwest New Mexico, it's far from certain they exist today at the same strength. A Think Progress graph showed many other much more important U.S. methane leaks than the one in northwest New Mexico.

If writer Perry spent more time studying the data instead of bashing Steve Pearce, his letters might be more accurate.

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