

SPRING 2021

# EARTHWORKS JOURNAL

**A NEW ERA:  
OUR OPPORTUNITY TO  
BUILD A CLEAN  
ENERGY FUTURE**



Our Priorities for Biden  
Protecting Alaska  
Peru: Thank You from Máxima  
The Permian Climate Bomb



EARTHWORKS.ORG





EARTHWORKS

Dedicated to protecting communities and the environment from the adverse impacts of mineral and energy development while promoting sustainable solutions.

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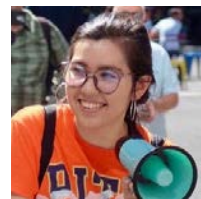
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## Our Newest Team Members

### Anaïs Peterson

*Petrochemicals and Infrastructure Organizer—Pittsburgh, PA*

Anaïs joined Earthworks in 2020 as a fellow and will be here until this summer, focusing on delaying and defeating petrochemical, crude oil, and liquid natural gas export facilities proposed for the Texas and Louisiana Gulf Coast. Anaïs has also been involved with the movement to stop the petrochemical buildout in Appalachia and is engaged with the People Over Petro Coalition. —***"I am thrilled to uplift and support incredible work happening across the Gulf Coast to ensure no community is sacrificed for profit."***

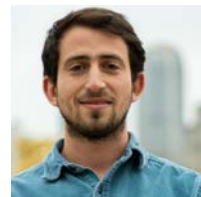


ANAÏS PETERSON

### Josh Eisenfeld

*Corporate Accountability Communications Campaigner—Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

Josh began his career as a documentary filmmaker focusing on social justice. Josh is one of two Pennsylvania Steering Committee members of the People Over Petro Coalition and serves on the board of directors of Three Rivers Waterkeeper, and is also a dedicated member of the Fineview Citizens Council. —***"I am excited to take on some of the world's largest polluters and expose the difference between what they say and what they actually do."***



JOSH EISENFELD

### Chris Millis

*Finance and Operations Associate—Washington, D.C.*

Chris provides additional capacity to our philanthropy and finance teams to better support donors and handle funding. He worked for 13 years for the nonprofit BoardSource as Operations Manager, and outside of work enjoys reading, theater, and travel. Originally from Wilmington, NC, he has lived in Washington, D.C. since 2006. —***"Earthworks is working to confront and solve problems that many for-profit companies proliferate. I am happy to help reduce harm from mining and fossil fuel industries."***



CHRIS MILLIS





# BIDEN ERA PROGRESS!

As President Biden took office this January, we laid out top priorities for his administration to address. Here's a progress report.

By Raquel Dominguez and Phil Dickieson

## Restoring America's Leadership on Climate.

After four years of climate crisis denial and contempt for international cooperation from the previous administration, we urged President Biden to re-join the Paris Agreement on climate change and take global leadership to avert catastrophe. **PROGRESS:** President Biden re-joined the Paris Agreement, signaling to the world that the U.S. is once again ready to tackle our climate crisis. He also created a climate team with John Kerry and Gina McCarthy, and has elevated climate into the government's goals.

## Confronting Methane Pollution.

The Trump administration attacked two critical Obama era measures from the Environmental Protection Agency and the Bureau of Land Management designed to restrict methane pollution, a potent contributor to

the climate crisis. We pressed President Biden to restore the rules.

**PROGRESS:** President Biden issued an executive order for new methane regulations in the oil and gas sector. Next we are going to push for even stronger standards.

## Protecting Public Lands.

We asked President Biden to issue an immediate moratorium on oil and gas leasing on all public lands, reverse the cuts to Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears national monuments, and keep the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge closed to drilling.

**PROGRESS:** President Biden directed the Department of the Interior to conduct a review of the boundaries for the two national monuments. Earthworks



Adobe Stock / Prullista



Leon Verding / Alamy

Interim Field Manager and New Mexico Field Advocate Nathalie Eddy and board member Mark Squillace testified to the Department of the Interior in support of a moratorium on oil and gas leasing.

## Reinstituting Environmental Regulations.

We asked President Biden to reverse changes to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

**PROGRESS:** President Biden announced his intentions to undo Trump's changes to NEPA, and the Council on Environmental Quality has issued improved NEPA guidance.



What do you think of our priorities? Give us your feedback at [Earthworks.org/survey](https://earthworks.org/survey).

And there's so much more to do!

A few more of our priorities for the Biden administration.

### Protect our Land, Air, and Water

- Deny the Oak Flat mine on sacred San Carlos Apache land in Arizona, as well as other ill-advised mine proposals on public lands.
- Establish a more stringent ozone standard of 60 - 65 parts per billion (ppb).
- Revise the "Waters of the United States" definition to protect ephemeral streams and isolated wetlands.
- Restore Section 401 of the Clean Water Act permitting authority, making it easier to deny permits that would cross streams and wetlands.

### Stop Expansion of a Dying Industry

- Stop expansion of oil and gas by revoking and denying pipeline and infrastructure permits.
- Reinstate the crude oil export ban.
- Create strong standards for hydraulic fracturing (fracking) to make it more difficult to use the technology on public lands.
- Create a Just Transition Task Force to transition to a sustainable energy future.
- Encourage a sustainable minerals economy by promoting the reuse and recycling of key minerals, and minimizing the need for new mining.

## Thank You from Máxima

By Ellen Moore

"Our resistance would not have been possible if we hadn't encountered the infinite support of organizations and individuals... We found people willing to fight alongside us, shoulder to shoulder"

— Máxima Acuña de Chaupe

U.S. Mining giant Newmont continues to bully Peruvian farmer Máxima Acuña de Chaupe in hopes of stripping her and her family of all rights to live on their own land. Máxima has been fighting to protect her home, and the Andean lakes and ecosystems from the devastation of the Conga mine.

As Máxima waits for court decisions, she remains hopeful for the future and thankful for support from Earthworks.

PHOTO: Denver Justice and Peace Committee



Learn more at [earthworks.org/maxima](https://earthworks.org/maxima)

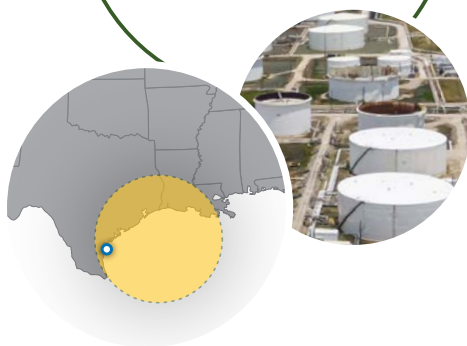


## End Our Addiction to Fossil Fuels

1

Delay and defeat new oil and gas infrastructure

Allow renewable energy technologies to take hold, and end public support for new oil and gas export facilities.



### OUR ACTIONS: Organizing opposition to crude oil export projects along the Texas Gulf Coast

Since late 2019, nearly a dozen oil export terminal projects have been proposed all along the Texas and Louisiana Gulf Coast (map above). We're supporting community opposition to the proposed Sea Port Oil Terminal (SPOT) and Texas GulfLink projects. If built, they would include large storage terminals, miles of pipelines running through sensitive wetland ecosystems and under the sea floor, and offshore platforms to transport up to two million barrels of oil a day.

Earthworks and our allies alerted Texas coastal communities in Brazoria and Harris counties of these threats. Landowners and community members then spoke out in opposition. The permitting process has been halted and communities are ready to continue the fight.

PHOTO: Texas oil refinery by ASP Inc. / Adobe Stock

2

Protect the public from pollution

Implement strong safeguards on air pollution and hazardous waste to reduce health risks.



### OUR ACTIONS: Pushing for more transparency and protections in Colorado

In Colorado, citizen complaints against oil and gas operators have been a very effective method of pushing for tighter regulations.

We're pressuring the Department of Public Health and Environment to adopt a new, more transparent, and accessible complaint system that will allow people to see and make complaints more effectively, which will in turn reduce oil and gas pollution.

New rules were adopted as a result of our push for greater transparency: a 2,000 foot setback from homes and schools for all new oil and gas facilities is now required; routine venting and flaring is prohibited; and other improvements to reduce pollution have been made. New regulations protect the health of local communities and create new hurdles and cost to companies already operating on razor thin margins, which discourages new development.

PHOTOS: Senior Field Advocate Sharon Wilson (right), filming pollution at a Colorado wellsite (left) with an optical gas imaging camera.

3

Ensure that government regulates and enforces rules

Push state and federal governments to more effectively oversee the oil and gas industry.



### OUR ACTIONS: Holding policymakers accountable with ground-breaking reports

Years of on the ground data collection and research reveal that state regulatory and enforcement agencies lack the capacity to enforce the rules and that policymakers are susceptible to political influence from the oil and gas industry. We're sounding the alarm.

In multiple states industry is expanding while the regulatory system that permits drilling is ineffective and disjointed. The oil and gas industry is releasing increasing volumes of greenhouse gases despite scientific consensus that fossil fuel pollution must decrease to avoid the worst climate crisis scenarios.

Policymakers and the general public assume that state and federal governments have both the will and the resources to adequately oversee a complex and increasingly polluting industry. That assumption is wrong and, by exposing the truth we are pressuring policymakers to protect the public.



# The stakes couldn't be higher.

Here's what we need to do to confront the climate crisis head-on.

## Ensure a Clean, Just, and Equitable Energy Future

### 4 Delay and defeat destructive mines

Ensure that mining does not threaten communities or the environment.



#### **VICTORY:** Pebble Mine permit denied

The Army Corps of Engineers rejected the permit for the proposed Pebble Mine in Alaska in 2020. Pebble would result in "significant degradation" to aquatic resources that would be "contrary to the public interest." The mine would generate nearly one million ton of greenhouse gas emissions per year.

This campaign is not over yet. The company is appealing the decision. We're asking the EPA to use its authority under the Clean Water Act to establish limits that prevent mine waste dumping in rivers and streams. We're also asking Congress to establish a fishery reserve to provide lasting protection against large-scale mining in Bristol Bay.

Defeating Pebble Mine sets a precedent that will inspire others around the world facing habitat destroying mining projects.

PHOTOS: Bristol Bay ©2006 Robert Glenn Ketchum [robertglennketchum.com](http://robertglennketchum.com). Grizzly bear by Ken Morrish

### 5 Hold corporations accountable

Pressure financial institutions and corporations to demand responsible mineral sourcing.



#### **OUR ACTIONS:** Cleaning up our battery supply chain

We're fighting to ensure that our renewable energy future is powered by responsibly and equitably sourced minerals that minimize the need for new extraction through recycling and reuse. As demand for lithium, cobalt, and nickel rises, we're calling for the Electric Vehicle (EV) battery supply chain to be more responsible, transparent, and accountable.

Earthworks is a founding member of Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA), which is currently working with BMW, Ford Motor Co., and Daimler-Mercedes-Benz, to form more responsible mining practices for EV batteries and other minerals. We are encouraging EV producers to make their supply chains more transparent, ensure community consent at mining operations, and push their suppliers to be more responsible to prevent harm.

PHOTOS: Gennady Schukin, Indigenous People's Leader in Russia, protesting irresponsible mineral development for battery electric vehicles. By Aborigen Forum.



Charging station by Noel / Adobe Stock

### 6 Engage frontline partners to shut down dirty mining

Support local communities in their fights.



#### **VICTORY:** Community partners in Indonesia celebrate protecting the ocean

We're celebrating major wins in the fight to stop mine waste dumping in the ocean. After community pressure, major financial institutions have prohibited or restricted financing for companies that mine irresponsibly.

Indonesia halted plans to dump more 31 million tonnes of toxic waste into the biodiverse Coral Triangle from two electric vehicle battery nickel projects.

By standing with local communities and providing campaign support and expertise, we pressured the customers and banks of irresponsibly mined minerals to withdraw their support for the EV battery nickel projects. We connected frontline voices to international media outlets and coauthored an opinion piece in *China Dialogue* on how the EV sector can protect oceans from mine waste dumping.

PHOTO: Villagers protest plans to use deep sea tailings placement at the Wafi Golpu mine in Papua New Guinea. By Lae Circuit Lutheran Youth



**Learn more about ocean mine waste dumping at [earthworks.org/ditchoceandumping](http://earthworks.org/ditchoceandumping)**



Photo: Julie Dermansky/istock.com

# A New Opportunity TO REFORM U.S. MINING LAWS

By Raquel Dominguez

A broad and diverse coalition led by mining impacted communities is advancing reform with the 117th Congress and the Biden administration.

While congressional action is the long-term solution, the Biden administration can provide immediate relief by strengthening our public lands mining rules right now. Updated rules could provide land managers the power to deny proposals for mines where they do not belong, and also can establish more meaningful tribal consultation and indigenous resource protections. Mines would have to meet detailed performance and operating standards, using the best available technology from exploration through post-closure.

Though the mining industry is a formidable lobbying force, the Biden administration is off to a strong start.

The most responsible way to source minerals is to build robust recycling, collection, and reuse supply chains. With your help, we are promoting circular economy solutions to policymakers. We also continue to urge mining reforms necessary for our just, equitable, and sustainable transition. Stay tuned for more updates.

**The President's actions suggest a more inclusive approach to tribal consultation, more attention to science, and a better understanding of mining's impacts on communities.**



**Learn more about U.S. mining reform at [earthworks.org/1872](https://earthworks.org/1872)**



The Berkeley Pit mine in Butte, Montana.

## Alaska Public Lands CRISIS Averted

By Bonnie Gestring

In the final days of the Trump administration, while all eyes were focused on the highly controversial decision to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to drilling, another effort was underway to open vast swaths of Alaska's pristine public lands to mining and oil and gas interests.

President Trump's Bureau of Land Management planned to open nearly 26 million acres of public land in Alaska to mining and oil and gas development. These lands include the Bering Sea, Western Interior, and the Central Yukon regions.

This region is home to animals and ecosystems that Alaska tribes have stewarded for thousands of years. Earthworks immediately filed formal objections on behalf of an Alaska Native Council and regional conservation groups.

In the first days of the new Biden administration, we and our allies in Alaska urged President Biden and Department of the Interior Secretary Haaland to change course. A more balanced management approach would safeguard the communities and land.

**President Biden heard our concerns and put an immediate hold on the previous BLM decisions.**

This fight is far from over. We will continue to push for permanent protections. Watch for updates!



PHOTO: NPS Ken Conger





# The Permian Basin Climate Bomb

## Be one of the first to see our new documentary

By Miguel Escoto

**D**iscovering the *Permian Climate Bomb* lays bare our climate crisis by taking viewers into the heart of the Permian Basin, America's fracking epicenter.

This story begins near my home in the border community of El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico — where a warming world has led to migration of “climate refugees,” and continues to the boom-and-bust oil town of Pecos, Texas.

**This short film shows the oil and gas industry's harmful secret—plumes of methane pollution causing irreparable harm to our climate.**

I'll be working with Senior Field Advocate Sharon Wilson to provide an inside look at the Texas fracking industry. We'll explain the workings of the Permian oil fields, and present solutions to our growing climate crisis.

Our optical gas imaging footage exposes how invisible oil and gas methane emissions erupt all across the Permian Basin, and how these emissions are clearly linked to our growing climate crisis.

You'll get an inside look at the complete failure of government oversight in the Texas Permian, and we'll find answers to some key questions on how to dig ourselves out of the mess we're in:

- What role does the Texas state government play in one of the world's most fracked, most destructive oil and gas regions?
- How much does the Permian Basin contribute to global climate change?
- How does the immense power of the Permian's oil and gas industry influence other regions?
- What's next in our fight to prevent a climate crisis?

We'll conclude with action climate activists can take to expose the oil and gas industry's huge methane pollution — and how we can all work to hold the government and fossil fuel companies accountable.

### Coming to your screen soon...stay tuned to learn more!

Miguel Escoto is an Earthworks' West Texas Field Associate and is training in thermography. He will join Sharon Wilson in documenting the oil and gas industry's invisible but destructive pollution with Earthworks' optical gas imaging cameras. He is pictured on the cover of this issue at a climate protest in El Paso, Texas.



Like many in his generation, Miguel's concern for the climate crisis has driven him to activism, political education, and community organizing. Although he is based in El Paso just a few hours from the West Texas Permian Basin, he (like many) had not realized the magnitude of the Permian's role in the climate crisis.



## More than the Permian Basin in New Mexico and Texas are at risk

Across the country we've identified lax regulations and at-risk communities. Our “Loud and Clear” series of reports provides the technical basis for broad reforms in Ohio, Pennsylvania, California, Colorado, Texas, and New Mexico.



Learn more at [earthworks.org/publications](https://earthworks.org/publications)

# Earthworks IN THE NEWS



## Unregulated and Unfettered Pollution on Texas State Lands

We are holding Texas accountable for its reckless methane emissions. Findings from Earthworks and Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) reveal huge issues with unlit flares venting methane directly into the air and fueling our climate crisis.

“This report adds to a mounting pile of evidence that Texas’ flaring regulations, or lack thereof, are entirely inadequate.” — Sharon Wilson, quoted in DeSmog

## S&P Global

## Safety First! Mine Waste Guidelines Must Be Adopted

It’s been two years since the deadly Brumadinho mine waste disaster in Brazil killed nearly 300 people and destroyed a community. Earthworks has been working tirelessly to prevent another tragedy by introducing new safety standards.

“Earthworks has called for several protections beyond the global standard, including a ban on new facilities immediately upstream from inhabited areas. [Earthworks] has also called for a ban on tailings dams built using the upstream construction method, and for the closure of existing upstream dams.” — S&P Global



Read more at [earthworks.org/news](https://earthworks.org/news)



ON THE COVER:  
Miguel Escoto, West Texas Field Associate, at a climate march in El Paso, Texas.

PHOTO: Margaret Cataldi, University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) Prospector

JOIN IN THE CONVERSATION AND SPREAD THE WORD



[earthworks.org](https://earthworks.org)



[earthworksaction](https://earthworksaction.org)

## A vision of people and nature intertwined: Casey Camp-Horinek

Casey Camp-Horinek is a Councilwoman and Hereditary Drumkeeper of the Women’s Scalp Dance Society of the Ponca Nation of Oklahoma. She joined Earthworks’ Board of Directors in 2019.



PHOTO: Brenda Norrell, Censored News

### On how she became involved with Earthworks:

“Several years ago Earthworks came to Ponca territory in Oklahoma and [hosted] a “toxic tour” of our homelands with my son Mekasi. Earthworks helped in exposing the leakage of methane gas from the tanks around our tribal headquarters using their special optical gas imaging infrared camera. 30 out of 30 sites were leaking and Earthworks helped to document that. When Earthworks asked about my interest in joining the board, it felt like a chance to reciprocate and see if adding an Indigenous viewpoint might help at this critical moment of climate crisis.

### On her hopes for the new administration:

“We want to “Build Back Better,” starting in our communities. Give us a real green economy — that would be a real start toward correcting 500 years of genocidal policies against the Indigenous people of this land. We [Native Communities] are global leaders of green movements, including the Rights of Nature, which provides legal standing for ecosystems in court.

### On protecting the planet:

“Mother Earth’s health, her nature, and that of our indigenous peoples are intertwined, inseparable. Mother Earth is life. This inseparable relationship must be respected through rights based instruments for the sake of our future generations and for the well-being of the Earth herself. For all people. For all life.



Casey proudly supported Deb Haaland’s nomination as the first Native American U.S. Secretary of the Interior. Read more at: [earthworks.org/Haaland](https://earthworks.org/Haaland).