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Using CO2 to extract oil is ultimately worse for the environment, report says

BY: JACK O'CONNOR - AUGUST 7, 2024 2:06 PM



📷 Environmental risks, economic problems and public health threats are also reasons to oppose CO2 EOR, according to a new report. (Photo by Joe Raedle/Getty Images)

A new report warns that using captured carbon dioxide to help extract oil and gas won't reduce greenhouse gas emissions and could create new public health concerns.

The process, known as carbon dioxide enhanced oil recovery, or EOR, has been advertised by the oil industry as a climate mitigation tool despite evidence to the contrary, activists say.

The [48-page report](#), authored by the Bold Alliance and Science and Environmental Health Network, outlines the environmental, public and economic consequences of EOR.

Bold and SEHN officials criticized current government pro-carbon capture policies in a press conference following the report's release.

"Enhanced oil recovery is not a public benefit. It is not in the public interest," SEHN Executive Director Carolyn Raffensperger said.

Sandra Steingraber, a senior scientist with SEHN, pushed back against claims that EOR is environmentally friendly and called EOR the "new fracking."

"It's a climate problem dressed up as a climate solution," Steingraber said. "In the language of the day, if you might remember, fracking was called the bridge to the future, the bridge to renewables. And in fact, we now understand that North American fracking operations set in motion spiking global methane emissions."

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Steingraber said EOR releases more carbon dioxide, or CO₂, into the atmosphere than it puts underground because it continues the nation's reliance on fossil fuels. Burning the oil recovered from EOR emits at least two times as much carbon dioxide that is pumped underground during the process, according to the report.

The report notes that carbon dioxide EOR poses "considerable public health threats."

Exposure to the pollutants released throughout the process could increase the risk of heart disease, asthma and lung cancer, SEHN Science Director Ted Schettler said. For pregnant women, the odds of a premature birth, low birthweight and pre-term birth are also worsened.

Those who worked on the report at the press conference also criticized current government tax policies which offer a tax credit for companies for every CO₂ ton captured and stored.

Food and Water Watch Policy Director Jim Walsh said eliminating these tax credits should be a priority for any politician.

"Congress must first act to eliminate billions in tax credits for this carbon capture subsidy," Walsh said. "This should be at the top of

the list for Republicans who rail against government waste and Democrats who care about protecting the climate and public health. This is a true bipartisan solution that members of Congress need to come together on.”

The report called on government officials to end their support of CO2 EOR in order to protect the environment and fight climate change.

“CO2 EOR is a moral failure, a climate failure and a threat to public health and the environment, all while being publicly funded,” the report says. “CO2 EOR is the last best hope for the fossil fuel industry to keep pumping oil out of the ground. It must end.”



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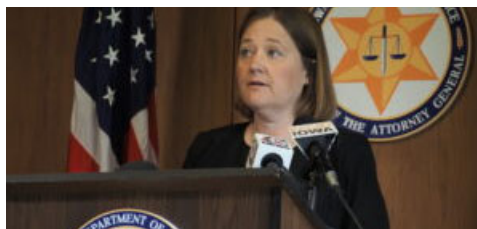
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