Connecticut Debate Association

October 8th, 2022, AITE

THBT the reopening of federal land and water for oil and gas drilling will do more harm than good.

NOTE: In April, 2022, the Biden administration reopened federal land for oil and gas drilling that the administration had previously closed. In August, 2022, President Biden signed into law the Inflation Reduction Act that opened more lands for potential drilling, alongside substantial investments in climate change measures. This motion is intended to address both of these decisions.

Preservation of Scenic Natural and Historical Landmarks

Gale Opposing Viewpoints Online Collection 2018

The federal government owns approximately 640 million acres of land in the United States, more than a quarter of the country's total land. The US Department of Defense (DOD) uses about 11 million acres of this land for military purposes, but the bulk of federal land is managed by agencies within the US Department of the Interior (DOI) and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). Some of this land is leased to private citizens and companies for commercial purposes, such as grazing, oil drilling, timber cutting, or surface mineral extraction. To preserve the natural environment, other parts of federal land have been designated as wildlife refuges and wilderness areas, limiting the extent to which people can use them. Other areas of land have been set aside for the purposes of honoring notable individuals, commemorating historical events, and providing citizens and visitors to the United States with access to the country's scenic nature. While many Americans may never visit a wildlife refuge or use federal lands for commercial purposes, hundreds of millions of citizens and foreign tourists visit federal lands every year. Lawmakers have enacted and amended many pieces of legislation to ensure that present and future generations can enjoy the country's scenic and historic areas.

Biden administration to resume leasing for oil and gas drilling on federal lands

NBC News Josh Lederman and Zoë Richards FRI, APR 15 2022

The Biden administration said it will resume selling leases to drill for oil and gas on federal lands starting next week, but with a major reduction in the number of acres offered and an increase in the royalties companies must pay to drill.[1]

The Interior Department announced that on Monday it will release a sale notice for leases to drill on 144,000 acres of government land — 80 percent less than what was initially being evaluated for potential leasing.

President Joe Biden, who on the campaign trail called for an end to drilling on federal lands, has been looking for ways to temporarily increase U.S. energy production to help drive down the price of gas.

The move comes amid growing pressure for the Biden administration to do more to lower gas prices, with Republicans in particular saying it should allow more drilling.

Industry experts say it would take at least six months to a year before new drilling on federal land would produce additional supply and ultimately bring down the cost of gas, which has emerged as a major midterm election issue.

Friday's announcement, however, is likely to rankle environmentalists. During the 2020 presidential campaign, Biden had urged a complete end to drilling for oil and gas on federal lands, but courts disagreed with his initial moratorium that he signed when he took office.

In late February, the administration said it was delaying decisions on new oil and gas drilling on federal land after a federal court blocked federal agencies from using an estimate known as the "social cost of carbon" to evaluate the damage done by carbon emissions stemming from energy production.

The Interior Department on Friday said the new leasing would come with a royalty rate of 18.75 percent, up from the previous 12.5 rate that critics complained was far lower than what energy companies pay to drill on most state lands.

New climate law signed by Biden to slice carbon pollution 40 percent, study says

PBS Aug 18, 2022

Clean energy incentives in the new spending package signed this week by President Joe Biden will trim America's emissions of heat-trapping gases by about 1.1 billion tons (1 billion metric tons) by 2030, a new Department of Energy

[1] Royalties are the percentage of oil profits that a fossil fuel company must pay to the federal government in order to drill on federal lands

analysis shows.

The first official federal calculations, shared with The Associated Press before its release Thursday, say that between the bill just signed and last year's infrastructure spending law, the U.S. by the end of the decade will be producing about 1.26 billion tons (1.15 billion metric tons) less carbon pollution than it would have without the laws. That saving is equivalent to about the annual greenhouse gas emissions of every home in the United States.

The Energy Department analysis finds that with the new law by 2030, U.S. greenhouse gas emissions should be about 40 percent lower than 2005 levels, which is still not at the U.S. announced target of cutting carbon pollution between 50 percent and 52 percent by the end of the decade. But that 40 percent reduction is similar to earlier calculations by the independent research firm Rhodium Group, which figured cuts would be 31 percent to 44 percent and the scientists at Climate Action Tracker, which said the drop would be 26 percent to 42 percent.

Most of the projected emissions reductions in the nearly $375 billion spending package would come in promoting "clean energy," mostly solar and wind power and electric vehicles, the federal analysis said. More than half of the overall projected emission drops would come in how the nation generates electricity, the analysis said. About 10 percent of the savings in emissions come from agriculture and land conservation.

The new law's provisions that call for oil and gas leasing on federal land and water "may lead to some increase" in carbon pollution, the federal analysis said, but the other provisions to spur cleaner energy cut 35 tons of greenhouse gas for every new ton of pollution from the increased oil and gas drilling.

Outside experts, such as Bill Hare of Climate Action Tracker, say the new law is a big step for the United States, but it's still not enough considering that America is the biggest historic carbon polluter, had done little for decades and lags behind Europe.

"At this point anything going in that direction you count as a win, right? I mean after so long a time of total inaction and knowing how difficult politically it is to get the country moving in a direction like this due to politics and economics and all the other things involved with this issue," National Center for Atmospheric Research climate scientist Gerald Meehl, who wasn't part of the analysis, said about what the new law will do.

"You can argue that's not nearly enough, but I think once you start seeing motion, you hope that then we can build on that and kind of keep the ball rolling."

Where the New Climate Law Means More Drilling, Not Less

New York Times Lisa Friedman Sept. 14, 2022

A compromise built into the law ensures oil and gas leasing in the Gulf of Mexico for the next decade. Activists say the region has been "sacrificed" to fossil fuels.

HOUMA, La. — Justin Solet planted his foot on the edge of his camouflage green boat in Bayou Chauvin and pointed to a natural gas rig protruding from the waters ahead. A web of pipelines and rusted storage tanks jutted up from the marsh behind him as a shrimp boat floated past and markers for crab traps bobbed on the water's surface.

"We are water people," said Mr. Solet, 37, a member of the United Houma Nation, a Native community with many shrimpers, oyster farmers and crab fishers who depend on the Gulf of Mexico's bounty. "This is their livelihood. And it's right next to these tanks that I don't think have been fixed or serviced in years."

Oil and gas wells and drilling equipment are a persistent threat to the fishing industry in the Gulf. In addition to the 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster, there have been dozens of less-noticed oil spills. Last month, on the first day of Louisiana's inshore shrimp season, a tank platform collapsed, pouring 14,000 gallons into Terrebonne Bay and ruining the catch.

Now, more drilling may be on the way.

Under a new climate and tax law, the federal government will lease hundreds of millions more acres for offshore drilling in the Gulf in the next decade, even as it invests $370 billion to move the country away from fossil fuels and develop wind, solar and other renewable energy.

More Gulf leasing was among the concessions that Democrats and President Biden made to Senator Joe Manchin III of West Virginia, a Democrat who champions fossil fuels and whose vote for the legislation was crucial in the evenly divided Senate.

It came despite Mr. Biden's promise as a candidate to end new drilling on public land and in federal waters "period, period, period." And it came even though Deb Haaland, who will oversee the leasing as the interior secretary, said as a congresswoman in 2020 that "we need to act fast to counteract climate change and keep fossil fuels in the ground."

The leasing also follows a warning from the International Energy Agency that nations must stop approving new fossil fuel projects if the world has any hope of keeping the average global temperature from increasing 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels. That's the threshold beyond which scientists say the likelihood of catastrophic climate impacts increases considerably. The planet has already warmed 1.1 degrees Celsius.

The new law condemns communities like Houma, which are already dealing with storms made more intense by climate change, to continued reliance on oil and gas drilling, even as other parts of the United States race toward renewable power, said Cynthia Sarthou, executive director of Healthy Gulf, an environmental organization based in New Orleans.

“We were really sold down the river and had to serve the role of bargaining chip without the input of folks in Louisiana,” said Jack Sweeney, an activist with the Louisiana Bucket Brigade, an environmental nonprofit organization. The group’s members traveled to Mr. Biden’s home state of Delaware last month to point out that, while Congress and the administration are enabling more drilling in the Gulf, they are protecting the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. “The treatment of coastal Louisiana is so different,” he said.

Erik Milito, president of the National Ocean Industries Association, which represents offshore energy companies, said the new law created an “even playing field” for offshore oil and gas alongside wind. His organization said oil and gas production in the Gulf was projected to average about 2.6 million barrels of oil equivalent per day through 2040, and said the industry would support an estimated 372,000 jobs in the region during that time.

As oil drilling technology improves, the physical footprint of the industry is shrinking, Mr. Milito said.

On Wednesday the Interior Department announced that in compliance with the new law, it has reinstated 307 bids that the agency received last year to lease 80 million acres in the Gulf of Mexico. (The sale was canceled in January by a federal judge who ruled that the Biden administration had not sufficiently taken climate change into account, but it has been revived under the new climate law.)

Analysts have said the lease sale could produce up to 1.1 billion barrels of oil and would most likely emit 723 million metric tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere over its lifetime.

Ms. Haaland said this week the agency was “committed to implementing the law,” including the mandate for additional lease sales on public lands and in federal waters. Environmental groups have indicated they still plan to challenge the sale.

Skipper Williams, 71, who said he came from a family of boat captains, said the region prided itself on both fuel and food.

“It goes hand in hand,” said Mr. Williams, who runs a sporting goods store that sells T-shirts at the festival. As for oil spills, he said, “Does it hurt? Yeah. but does it hurt forever? No.”

Told that the new climate and tax law ensured more offshore oil and gas leasing in the Gulf, Mr. Williams said: “I think that’s the right thing to do. I mean, what do you suppose, we just convert all vehicle to electricity right now? You have a hurricane down here which we have every year practically. Well, you’re not going to get very far with an electric car.”

A.J. Richard, 68, worked as a pipe fitter for oil companies throughout the Gulf Coast and overseas for 36 years. He said Mr. Biden had “shut everything down” in the oil industry and blamed the president for inflation, including the $18 he and his wife Cathy, 66, paid at the festival for two hamburgers and two orders of fries.

The couple said they were not aware that Mr. Biden had signed a law ensuring more drilling leases in the Gulf but did not believe the president deserved credit for helping the region. Mr. Richard said he believed the area’s only hope was the 2024 presidential election.

“As long as it’s a Republican — it doesn’t have to be Trump — a Republican can straighten it all back up and people can start going back to work,” said Mr. Richard, who is retired.

Wanda Presa, 46, moved to Amelia, La., from New Jersey 14 years ago and now works as captain on a riverboat casino. She said she worried about climate change but was heartened to hear that oil and gas leasing would continue in the Gulf. It means more residents may have disposable income to spend.

“If there’s more leasing in the Gulf, that means I feel a little more secure in my job,” she said.

Even some whose livelihoods have been hurt by recent spills said they want the oil industry to thrive.

At a shrimp dock in the nearby town of Dulac, Kimberly Chauvin, co-owner of the David Chauvin Shrimp Company, said she was furious about the spill on the first day of shrimp season. Fishermen she works with “woke up in the oil” that day to find the slicks had fouled their catches, and the extent of the financial damage won’t be clear until the end of the season.

“We do have a double-edged sword,” she said of the Gulf’s reliance on oil and gas as she lifted fresh shrimp from blue plastic buckets into plastic bags for customers.

But Ms. Chauvin said she was skeptical about climate change and added that oil and gas are vital to the Gulf.

“We do need more leases,” Ms. Chauvin said. “We just also need more oversight.”

Mr. Solet nodded silently as Ms. Chauvin spoke. Afterward, he acknowledged that he treads carefully with friends and neighbors. His opposition to oil and gas expansion in the Gulf already has caused friction with family members who work in the industry, he said.

“People down here don’t like to be labeled as ‘you live in a sacrifice zone,’ because what they hear is, ‘You’re coming for our jobs. You’re coming for the food on my table, the clothes on my child’s back, a way of life I love,’” he said.

Mr. Solet himself worked for nine years on oil rigs until the Deepwater Horizon spill turned him to activism. He also comes

from a long line of commercial fishermen whose livelihoods he has seen altered by coastal erosion, waters that have been battered by increasingly devastating hurricanes or threatened by aging infrastructure.

"I'm afraid by the time my youngest one is 16 years old, I won't be able to bring him here," Mr. Solet said. "It's going to be gone."

Fulfilling Pledge to Ban Federal Drilling Proves Difficult for Biden Administration

By Benjamin Storrow   Scientific American (reprinted from E&E News) December 2, 2021

Ending oil and gas drilling on federal lands would cause a relatively small reduction in greenhouse gas emissions

Joe Biden was on the campaign trail in New Hampshire last year when he made one the flashiest pledges of his presidential run.

"And, by the way, no more drilling on federal lands, period. Period, period, period," he told voters in February before the election.

Fulfilling the pledge has been a challenge.

A federal judge in Louisiana blocked the administration's pause on new oil and gas leases on federal land over the summer. And when the Interior Department released long awaited recommendations for overhauling its leasing program last week, it was silent on the topic of banning new leases (Energywire, Nov. 29).

It prompted cries from some environmental groups that the president had violated a major campaign pledge. But analysts say measuring the emissions impact is complicated.

"The leasing ban numbers are not trivial, but they are not going to make or break an NDC commitment or something like that," said Brian Prest, a fellow at Resources for the Future, referring to the commitments countries make to cut emissions under the Paris climate accord.

Federal lands, including offshore development, accounted for almost a quarter of U.S. oil production and more than 10 percent of natural gas output in fiscal 2020, according to Interior. Analysts have long argued over whether a ban on new leases is an effective way to lower emissions.

Some say it would push development elsewhere and could even drive up greenhouse gas levels by encouraging production of dirtier varieties of crude. An April analysis by Wood Mackenzie found that only Saudi Arabia has lower emissions intensity than oil produced in federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico.

"The bottom line is if you want to affect emissions you have to lower demand," said Marianne Kah, a former chief economist at ConocoPhilips Co. who now serves as a senior researcher at Columbia University's Center on Global Energy Policy.

Others disagree.

They contend many models overestimate the amount of lost federal production that would be made up elsewhere. And they note that comparing the emission intensity of oil production in different regions ignores the fact that most of the CO_2 from oil and gas comes from burning those fossil fuels—not drilling for them.

Take the Gulf of Mexico as an example. Drilling and transporting oil from the Mars oil and gas field produced 70 kilograms of carbon dioxide per barrel, according to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace's Oil Climate Index. Burning that oil produced 438 kg of CO_2 per barrel.

"Leaving oil in the ground in one place is a way to reduce global oil consumption," said Pete Erickson, who leads the climate policy program at the Stockholm Environment Institute. "In the big picture, it is just not true that if you leave some oil undeveloped it will be substituted one for one with someone else's oil."

A 2018 study co-authored by Erickson estimated that banning new leases would reduce emissions by 39 million tons annually.

In its recommendations last week, Interior made only passing mention of climate. Instead, it focused on reforming the oil and gas leasing program with higher royalty rates and more stringent bonding requirements to ensure that wells are cleaned up.

The agency did not propose a specific royalty rate, but Congress is weighing one. The "Build Back Better Act" would raise the royalty rate for onshore oil production to 18.75 percent, up from 12.5 percent (Greenwire, Nov. 22).

That would result in an annual emissions reduction of 4 million tons to 7 million tons after accounting for the policy's impact on global oil markets, according to an analysis by Resources for the Future. Banning new leases outright, by contrast, would yield annual reductions of 85 million tons to 147 million tons, RFF found.

That's a lot more avoided CO_2. But it's still less than 1.5 percent of total U.S. emissions.

There is wide agreement among climate experts that efforts to restrict fossil fuel production on public lands pale in comparison to other climate initiatives being pursued by the administration.

Jon Goldstein, a senior director at the Environmental Defense Fund, said the debate over a leasing ban is secondary to the climate impact of new methane regulations on oil and gas wells. EPA estimates that its proposed methane rule on oil and gas wells would reduce 920 million tons of CO2 equivalent through 2035.

“It’s not to downplay the importance of royalty and bonding reform. That stuff is critically important for other reasons,” Goldstein said. “But from a strictly tons perspective, the needle is going to get moved the most by getting these regulations right.”

Reducing emissions from oil and gas ultimately requires lowering the supply and consumption of those fossil fuels, said Alex Dewar, a consultant who tracks the oil and gas industry at the Boston Consulting Group. But restricting development on public lands is a relatively weak decarbonization tool next to the incentives for electric vehicle adoption contained in the “Build Back Better Act,” he said.

“Rather than focus on oil and gas leasing as a decarbornization lever, the focus ought to be on how transportation electrification can be accelerated,” Dewar said. “That will have the most impact on emissions in an aggregate way.”

What is Carbon Leakage

CLEAR Center (Clarity and Leadership for Environmental Awareness and Research at UC Davis)April 24, 2020

Countries around the world have varying greenhouse gas emissions policies to help limit climate change, with some stricter than others. Carbon leakage refers to a situation where a company decides to move their production from a country with stringent policies, to a country that is more lenient, leading to an increase in greenhouse gas emissions.

While some countries and states strive to reduce their contributions to global climate change, there are legitimate concerns that stricter pollution regulations come at the risk of losing businesses and jobs to competing nations with more lax policies. And while a country may see a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from a company leaving, the move may result in additional global greenhouse gas emissions if the company moves to a country with more lenient polices and produces more emissions. The additional emissions resulting from the move is considered carbon leakage.

To give an example, for years carbon emissions in the U.S. and Europe have been dipping, but in developing countries such as China and India, emissions are rapidly increasing. While the rise in greenhouse gas emissions in developing countries is largely due to domestic growth, it’s no secret that companies from wealthy countries set up factories in foreign countries to cut costs and avoid regulations, thus further contributing to global pollution.

Can carbon leakage be prevented?

Tax on goods imported from nations with weak climate policies is seen by some experts as a solution to leakage but by others, it’s seen as an obstacle due to political challenges and added economic competitiveness.

However, California does have an extensive cap-and-trade system in place which helps keep emissions down. Additionally, nine states in the American Northeast also participate in a cap-and-trade program, but it only applies to power plants.

Although the U.S. as a whole, isn’t likely to adopt a carbon tax any time soon, dozens of countries around the world – such as Chile and the European Union– have set a price on carbon. Most nations with a carbon tax struggle to set a price on carbon high enough to make a dent in reductions. Governments have to consider the risk of losing businesses or causing a public outcry due to rising energy costs.

Preventing carbon leakage is a complicated issue that requires sophisticated coordination worldwide. Needless to say, to see one country reduce emissions, only to see another increase theirs as a result, is not a solution to global climate change.

No new oil, gas or coal development if world is to reach net zero by 2050, says world energy body

Fiona Harvey The Guardian Tue 18 May 2021

Governments must close gap between net zero rhetoric and reality, says International Energy Agency head

Exploitation and development of new oil and gas fields must stop this year and no new coal-fired power stations can be built if the world is to stay within safe limits of global heating and meet the goal of net zero emissions by 2050, the world’s leading energy organisation has said.

In its strongest warning yet on the need to drastically scale back fossil fuels, the International Energy Agency (IEA) also called for no new fossil-fuel cars to be sold beyond 2035, and for global investment in energy to more than double from $2tn (£1.42tn) a year to $5tn (£3.54tn) The result would not be an economic burden, as some have claimed, but a net benefit to the economy.

Fatih Birol, the IEA’s executive director and one of the world’s foremost energy economists, told the Guardian: “If governments are serious about the climate crisis, there can be no new investments in oil, gas and coal, from now – from this

year."

He said strong new policies were needed from governments around the world: "More and more countries are coming up with net zero commitments, which is very good, but I see a huge and growing gap between the rhetoric [from governments] and the reality."

The IEA has released its most comprehensive report yet into what is needed to achieve the world's climate goals, the implications of which will be felt around the world. Few governments intend to halt fossil-fuel exploration. The UK is licensing new oil and gas fields in the North Sea, China is building coal-fired power plants, and oil companies are still investing in new output.

Birol said they must reconsider. "Our report does not ban anyone from anything. If governments are planning investments, it is up to them. But if governments make commitments to net zero emissions, they should see what the implications are."

Last month, the IEA warned that emissions would leap by the second biggest rise on record, largely owing to a resurgence of coal following last year's lockdowns.

Pledges made by governments in the run-up to the Cop26 UN climate talks, due to be held in Glasgow this November, are also inadequate and need to be strengthened if the world is to limit temperature rises to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels, he said. That limit, beyond which scientists predict dire consequences from climate breakdown, is the aspirational goal of the 2015 Paris agreement, and will require greenhouse gas emissions to be halved this decade.

The report found that these measures would create 30m new jobs, and add 0.4 percentage points a year to global GDP growth. Birol said about 5m jobs would be lost in sectors such as coal, but governments could do much to ease the transition.

Birol said that the technology to halve emissions by 2030 was already available and must be rolled out even faster. "A huge part can be done with existing technologies, there are no problems there," he said.

John Kerry, the US climate envoy, caused controversy when he suggested at the weekend that half of the carbon reductions needed to reach net zero by 2050 would be made using new technology. Climate experts including Michael Mann have become increasingly worried that some new critiques of climate action, such as the book published recently by the software billionaire Bill Gates, have focused too much on an idea that futuristic technologies will save the world from climate chaos, rather than focusing on what can be done today. Since the climate responds to cumulative emissions rather than current emissions, if cuts to carbon are left to the future and not made in this decade, it will be too late to stay within the 1.5C limit.

Birol made it clear that the technology needed to reach net zero is neither blue-sky nor futuristic. He said: "These technologies are already invented, but not yet in full development. Innovation is critical, but the technologies are here with us."

The crucial new technologies in development are: advanced batteries, particularly for use in electric vehicles; hydrogen; and carbon capture.

These will be needed because some sectors are especially hard to decarbonise, such as steel and cement manufacturing, aviation and shipping, and those using heavy-duty road vehicles. Birol said that most of the rest of the global economy could be decarbonised using economical technologies that are already in widespread use, such as wind and solar power.

The IEA has set out 400 milestones for governments to reach, including the phasing out of new fossil-fuel cars from 2035 and the decarbonisation of global electricity generation by 2040. Its analysis also took into account a global population rise of about 2 billion people, as well as the need to supply electricity to 785 million people who do not have access to it, and clean cooking to the 2.6 billion people who currently lack it. Doing so would cost about $40bn a year, or 1% of global annual energy sector investment, and would cut premature deaths from indoor air pollution by about 2.5m a year.

The IEA undertook the report – the most comprehensive yet into the global requirements to meet the net zero emissions target – at the request of the UK government.

Alok Sharma, president-designate of Cop26 and a former UK business secretary, said: "We must act now to scale up clean technologies in all sectors and phase out both coal power and polluting vehicles in the coming decade. Our first goal for the UK as Cop26 presidency is to put the world on a path to driving down emissions, until they reach net zero by the middle of this century."

The UK has begun the process of licensing new oil and gas fields in the North Sea and has also mooted a new coalmine for coking coal. Birol said that governments should consider what would happen to future demand and whether they might be left with stranded assets in the future.

He added that the IEA predicts that global oil demand will decline from the 90m barrels a day at present to about 24m barrels a day by 2050. "Therefore there will not be a need for new investments in oil and gas fields, or new investments in coalmines," he said. "It depends how governments take climate change seriously."

The climate bill's oil and gas provisions are a worthwhile tradeoff

Brookings Institute Samantha Gross August 4, 2022

CLIMATE BENEFITS VASTLY OUTWEIGH OIL AND GAS LEASING

There is a certain irony in pairing new oil and gas development – a key cause of climate change – with development of renewable energy – a key solution. And as you might expect, some in the environmental movement are howling. “It’s self-defeating to handcuff renewable energy development to massive new oil and gas extraction,” said Brett Hartl, government affairs director at the Center for Biological Diversity, also calling the bill “a climate suicide pact.” In an online statement, a senior scientist at 350.org called the bill a “sham” and said that it “contained so many giveaways to the fossil fuel industry” that it “turns all of the gains in addressing the climate crisis into a moot point.”

But many other environmentalists and clean energy proponents are praising the bill, and the numbers support their praise. Analysis from Energy Innovation shows that for every one ton of expected emissions from the bill’s fossil fuel provisions, the bill will result in 24 tons of emissions reductions. That’s a huge net positive! A reason for the large reduction in emissions is that the bill contains provisions affecting every major emitting sector in the economy – transportation, electricity generation, industry, homes and buildings, and agriculture. There’s something for everyone, and the broad scope of the bill brings large emissions reductions.

HARNESSING THE POWER OF CONSUMER DEMAND

Another reason for the large net positive impact on greenhouse gas emissions is less obvious, but very important. The bill aims to reduce fossil fuel demand by providing tax credits and rebates for consumers that purchase electric vehicles and energy efficient appliances, for utilities and developers that build renewable electricity and electricity storage, and for companies that build efficient factories or efficient products. Reducing fossil fuel demand is the way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

What about the fossil fuel production that the bill also seems to encourage? Well, there’s no guarantee that those acres will actually be leased if the fossil fuel industry doesn’t want them, nor that leased acres will ever actually deliver oil and gas. The oil and gas companies will make those decisions based on… wait for it… consumer demand.

The fossil fuel demand-reducing portions of the bill work at cross purposes with the fossil fuel leasing provisions. It’s an odd way to write legislation, but if that’s what it takes to pass the most important climate bill ever, so be it. As I’ve written before, ending U.S. oil and gas production is not the way to reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. The world has plenty of oil and gas (even though it doesn’t feel that way right now) and the United States will import whatever it doesn’t produce, perhaps from countries with lower environmental standards and higher greenhouse gas emissions profiles than our own. Fighting fossil fuel demand is the way to lower emissions, and this bill does just that.

NOT PERFECT, BUT A GOOD STEP

The bill is not perfect — legislation never is. Without Republican votes, the bill must be passed through the budget reconciliation process, which means that the bill cannot make substantive changes in law that do not have a budgetary affect. Thus, the provisions are all tax credits, fees, rebates, and the like — financial incentives to reduce emissions. The reconciliation process does not allow for direct regulation of emissions, since such regulation would not significantly involve the federal budget. And the bill entirely avoids the idea of a fee or tax for carbon dioxide emissions, a policy that prominent economists agree would be the most economically efficient way to achieve emissions reductions.

Nevertheless, we can’t let perfect be the enemy of good, and this bill is unquestionably good. I believe the fossil fuel demand reductions that the bill would bring about vastly outweigh the provisions encouraging production, and that the industry may never drill much of the land that might be leased. (Remember that there are more than 9,000 drilling permits on public lands today that are not being used, representing nearly 12 million onshore acres.) Passing this bill would be a huge win for our climate.

Judge restores oil lease on land sacred to Native Americans in US, Canada

Associated Press Matthew Brown September 9th, 2022

Attorneys for an oil and gas company are asking a federal judge to reinstate a drilling lease on federal land considered sacred to Native American tribes in the U.S. and Canada

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — A federal judge on Friday ordered the Biden administration to reinstate a drilling lease that has been in dispute for decades on land near the Blackfeet Indian Reservation that is considered sacred to Native American tribes in the U.S. and Canada.

The 10-square-mile (25-square-kilometer) oil and gas lease in the Badger-Two Medicine area of northwestern Montana was first issued in 1982. It was cancelled in 2016 under then-U.S. Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, at the request of the Blackfoot tribes and conservation groups.

There have been efforts to declare the area a national monument or make it a cultural heritage area, and tribal leaders have bitterly opposed drilling in recent decades.

But U.S. District Judge Richard Leon said Jewell lacked the authority to withdraw the lease so many years after it was sold and after several prior studies examined the environmental and other impacts of drilling in the area.

He ordered Interior Department officials to reinstate the lease and issue a drilling permit to Solenex LLC, the Louisiana company that holds the lease. Leon issued a similar order in 2018 that was later overturned on appeal.

"It is time to put an end to this interminable, and insufferable, bureaucratic chess match," Leon wrote in his 36-page decision.

The Badger-Two-Medicine is adjacent to Glacier National Park and is the site of the creation story of the Blackfoot tribes of southern Canada and Montana's Blackfeet Nation. The Blackfeet had intervened in the case on the side of the government, and tribal Historic Preservation Officer John Murray said the fight against drilling would continue.

"We've lived under this kind of reckless threat to our sacred lands for decades, and we will never surrender to roads and drill rigs in the Badger-Two Medicine," Murray said.

Solenex founder Sidney Longwell, who died last year, bought the lease but never drilled on the site. Instead, Longwell confronted major bureaucratic delays within the U.S. departments of Interior and Agriculture that prompted the company to sue in 2013.

Interior department officials did not have an immediate reaction to the ruling, spokesperson Melissa Schwartz said. A Solenex representative could not be reached for comment.=

Judge Leon criticized government officials for adopting the Blackfeet Tribe's position that drilling had the potential to "affect the power and spirituality" of the area without explaining what those effects were. He also rejected the claim from officials that the impacts to tribal resources could not be lessened if drilling occurred.

Renewable electricity generation is growing — but it's not enough to meet rising demand, IEA says

CNBC Anmar Frangoul JUL 15 2021

The planet's demand for electricity is set for a strong rebound this year and next after dropping by approximately 1% in 2020, according to a new publication from the International Energy Agency.

Released Thursday, the IEA's Electricity Market Report forecasts that global electricity demand will jump by nearly 5% in 2021 and 4% in 2022 as economies around the world look to recover from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Paris-based organization's report notes that although electricity generation from renewables "continues to grow strongly" — it's set to rise by 8% this year and over 6% in 2022 — it can't keep up with increasing demand.

The IEA said renewables were "expected to be able to serve only around half of the projected growth in global demand in 2021 and 2022." At the other end of the spectrum, electricity generation based on fossil fuels was "set to cover 45% of additional demand in 2021 and 40% in 2022."

When it comes to carbon dioxide emissions from the electricity sector, the IEA's report forecasts a rise of 3.5% this year and 2.5% in 2022.

Looking at the overall picture, fossil fuels remain dominant when it comes to electricity generation. Last year, coal was responsible for 34% of generation worldwide, while gas accounted for 25%, the IEA said. Renewables and nuclear combined to take a 37% share.

"Renewable power is growing impressively in many parts of the world, but it still isn't where it needs to be to put us on a path to reaching net-zero emissions by mid-century," Keisuke Sadamori, the IEA's director of energy markets and security, said in a statement.

"As the economy rebounds after the pandemic, we've seen a surge in electrical generation from fossil fuels," Sadamori added. "To shift to a sustainable trajectory, we need to massively step up investment in clean energy technologies — especially renewables and energy efficiency."

The shadow of the Paris Agreement, which aims to "limit global warming to well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels," looms large over the discussions about net-zero goals.

Cutting human-made carbon dioxide emissions to net-zero by 2050 is seen as crucial when it comes to meeting the 1.5 degrees Celsius target.

Later this year, the COP26 climate change summit will take place in the Scottish city of Glasgow. It's seen as a crucial event, with many hoping it will act as a catalyst for governments to step up their climate ambitions in order to meet the targets set out in the Paris accord.

While there is a sense of urgency about COP26, the reality on the ground shows just how big a challenge achieving climate-related goals will be in the years ahead.

Energy companies are still discovering new oil fields, for example, while in countries such as the U.S., fossil fuels continue to play a significant role in electricity production.

Back at the global level, in its latest report the IEA expects coal-fired electricity generation to rise "by almost 5% in 2021 and a further 3% in 2022, after having declined by 4.6% in 2020."

"As a result, coal-fired electricity generation is set to exceed pre-pandemic levels in 2021 and reach an all-time high in 2022," it adds.

Analysis: How the Ukraine conflict is reshaping global oil markets

Reuters Alex Lawler May 30, 2022

LONDON, May 30 (Reuters) - Russia's invasion of Ukraine has reconfigured the global oil market, with African suppliers stepping in to meet European demand and Moscow, stung by Western sanctions, increasingly tapping risky ship-to-ship transfers to get its crude to Asia.

The reroutings mark the biggest supply-side shakeup of the global oil trade since the U.S. shale revolution altered the shape of the market around a decade ago and suggest Russia will be able to navigate a European Union (EU) oil ban, provided Asia and China continue to buy its crude.

Sanctions imposed on Moscow after the conflict in Ukraine kicked off in February, including a U.S. ban on its oil imports, have prompted Russia to pivot away from Europe, where its crude is shunned, to customers in India and China who are picking up cargoes at a steep discount, according to industry data and traders. read more

Russian exports were back to pre-invasion levels in April, according to data from the Paris-based International Energy Agency and oil prices have stabilised around $110 after hitting a 14-year high above $139 a barrel in March.

Even if the EU agrees to an oil ban in its next round of Russian sanctions, analysts said the impact could be tempered by demand from Asia.

"Unless the West puts diplomatic pressure on Asian buyers, we do not see the supply gap widening and oil prices spiking," said Norbert Rücker of Julius Baer.

A complex patchwork of U.S., EU and British sanctions have prohibited Russian-owned or flagged ships from calling at ports meaning that some of the increased trade to Asia is being facilitated via ship-to-ship transfer at sea -- a costly process where the risk of spills is greater.

Overall, the flow of Russian oil to Asia via the sea has jumped at least 50% since the start of the year, according to tanker-tracker Petro-Logistics and other data.

Transfers between vessels, which account for a small fraction of the overall sea trade, have shifted away from the Danish coast to the Mediterranean Sea to avoid sanctions and protests.

"Ship-to-ship (STS) transfers were common in Danish waters, at the entry point of the Baltic Sea," Petro-Logistics President Mark Gerber told Reuters. "Those are not happening anymore; hence the STS trend of sanctioned tanker to non-sanctioned tanker increasing in the warmer and friendlier Mediterranean waters."

Gerber put the volumes of Russian crude and products being transferred between tankers in the Mediterranean at about 400,000 barrels per day (bpd), of which the majority is going to Asia, adding to the 2.3 million bpd going directly.

In January, before the invasion, around 1.5 million bpd were being sent directly to Asia.

Russian oil is loaded on Aframax or Suezmax tankers that carry less than 1 million barrels and it is transferred at sea to larger vessels that can take 2 million barrels, making shipping more cost effective, traders said.

The seaborne volumes are only part of the total exports from Russia. Including pipeline supplies, total Russian crude and products exports increased to just above 8 million bpd in April, back to the pre-invasion rate.

WEST AFRICAN CRUDE

To compensate for the loss of Russian oil, European refiners have been turning to imports of West African crude, which are up 17% in April compared to the 2018-2021 average according to Petro-Logistics.

Eikon data also shows an increase and indicates 660,000 bpd mostly from Nigeria, Angola and Cameroon is arriving in northwest Europe in May, with three cargoes of Nigerian Amenam coming compared to one in February.

Volumes of west African crude to India, meanwhile, have nearly halved, according to Gerber, with 280,000 bpd delivered in April from 510,000 bpd in March as Delhi switches to Russian supply.

With European demand red-hot, the prices of Nigerian light, sweet crude grades in particular are hitting record highs, according to traders, with Forcados crude for example offered at a premium of at least $7 to Brent.

Supply from North Africa to Europe is up by 30% since March, Petro-Logistics said. Of this, Eikon data indicates arrivals into northwest Europe from Egypt's Sidi Kerir port, which analysts say is likely Saudi crude, will almost double versus

March to above 400,000 bpd in May.

The United States has also boosted supply to Europe. European crude imports in May from the U.S. on a delivered basis are up over 15% versus March, according to tracking company Kpler, the highest monthly pace in its records. Europe has discharged about 1.45 million bpd of crude from the United States.