

The Death Grip of Fossil Fuels

It's better to burn out than fade away...until it kills you.

[Angus Peterson](#)

The United States is hurtling toward an environmental disaster of unprecedented proportions, fueled — quite literally — by the explosion of oil and gas production within its borders. For all the rhetoric about addressing climate change, the reality is this: even under the ostensibly eco-conscious Biden administration, U.S. oil and gas production has surged to historic highs.

With the Trump administration poised to assume office, bringing with it policies designed to further entrench fossil fuel dependence, the country is on track to exacerbate an already dire ecological overshoot, accelerating its descent into collapse. This article examines the trajectory of oil and gas production, the systemic failures that enable fossil fuel companies to evade accountability, and the grim future that awaits under unchecked environmental exploitation.

The Fracking Boom and Its Consequences

In the last decade, the advent of [hydraulic fracturing](#) has revolutionized U.S. energy production. The United States has become the world's largest producer of oil and gas, with output reaching new heights year after year. According to the Energy Information Administration, U.S. crude oil production averaged 12.3 million barrels per day in 2023, a staggering achievement enabled by the extraction of previously inaccessible reserves.

The environmental cost of this bonanza is incalculable. Not only have carbon emissions increased due to the abundance of (relatively) cheap energy sources, but methane emissions, [which are much more harmful](#), have drastically spiked. Despite President Biden's campaign promises to address climate change, his administration has greenlit drilling projects like Willow in Alaska and issued thousands of new oil and gas leases on federal lands. While the administration has simultaneously invested in renewable energy, these measures pale in comparison to the unchecked expansion of fossil fuel production.

Why the contradiction? The answer lies in the twin forces of political expediency and consumer demand. U.S. voters, while ostensibly supportive of climate action, remain unwilling to grapple with the economic and lifestyle shifts necessary to reduce fossil fuel consumption. Politicians, beholden to a fossil fuel industry that spends billions on lobbying and campaign contributions, lack the will — or more accurately, the courage — to legislate meaningful change.

Project 2025 and the Upcoming Fossil Fuel Frenzy

Enter the incoming Trump administration, which has signaled its intent to double down on fossil fuel production. Through Project 2025, the administration aims to dismantle regulatory barriers to oil and gas extraction while expanding subsidies and tax incentives for fossil fuel companies. The plan explicitly prioritizes energy "dominance," promising to unleash what it calls the "full potential" of U.S. energy resources.

Kathleen Sgamma, president of the Western Energy Alliance and a vocal advocate for the oil and gas industry, authored the energy chapter of Project 2025. Her influence is emblematic of the revolving door between the fossil fuel industry and the political establishment. The plan calls for eliminating permitting delays, increasing offshore drilling, and boosting natural gas exports. Environmental considerations are dismissed outright, with the policy framework ignoring the irrefutable link between fossil fuel combustion and climate change.

Under Trump's leadership, we can expect a return to the deregulatory fervor of his first term. This includes [reinstating environmental rollbacks](#), [defunding climate science initiatives](#), and prioritizing short-term economic gains over long-term ecological sustainability. The result will be a massive increase in greenhouse gas emissions, the destruction of sensitive ecosystems, and the intensification of global climate instability.

Abandoned Wells and Corporate Evasion

The environmental impact of fossil fuel production extends far beyond the emissions from burning oil and gas. Across the country, there are an estimated 3.4 million abandoned oil and gas wells, many of which leak methane and contaminate local water supplies. [A recent investigation by ProPublica](#) revealed the extent to which oil companies exploit legal loopholes to shirk their responsibility for cleaning up these sites. By declaring bankruptcy or transferring ownership to shell companies, operators can avoid the costly process of sealing wells and restoring drilling sites, leaving taxpayers to foot the bill.

This blatant evasion of accountability is emblematic of a larger systemic failure. Oil companies are not held responsible for the full environmental costs of their operations, from emissions to site cleanup. Instead, they benefit from an elaborate web of [subsidies, tax breaks, and regulatory leniency](#) that distorts markets and stifles competition from renewable energy. According to the Environmental and Energy Study Institute, federal and state subsidies for fossil fuels total over \$20 billion annually.

The inclusion of Kathleen Sgamma in Project 2025 underscores the fossil fuel industry's grip on policy-making. Sgamma's Western Energy Alliance has long lobbied against stricter regulations on [methane emissions](#) and drilling operations, arguing that such measures would hinder economic growth. Her leadership in shaping Trump's energy policy guarantees that the industry's interests will continue to take precedence over environmental and public health concerns.

The Ecological Reckoning

What does this mean for the future? To anyone familiar with the concept of ecological overshoot, the answer is clear: the United States is accelerating toward collapse. Overshoot occurs when humanity consumes resources faster than ecosystems can regenerate them and produces waste, such as greenhouse gases, at rates ecosystems cannot absorb. The fossil fuel economy is a textbook example of this imbalance, with dire consequences for biodiversity, climate stability, and human survival.

The symptoms of this crisis are already manifesting. From record-breaking heatwaves and wildfires to [catastrophic flooding](#) and [drought](#), the effects of climate change are becoming impossible to ignore. Yet the political and economic systems that underpin U.S. society remain steadfastly committed to a trajectory of unchecked growth and resource exploitation.

[The polycrisis](#)— a term used to describe the [interconnected crises](#) of climate change, biodiversity loss, economic inequality, and geopolitical instability — is no longer a distant threat. It is here, and it is accelerating faster than even the most dire predictions. The incoming Trump administration, with its unrepentant embrace of fossil fuels, will only deepen these crises, pushing the U.S. and the world closer to the brink.

The Enemy Within

At its core, the fossil fuel crisis is a product of collective failure. Politicians are complicit, yes, but so are the consumers who demand cheap energy and the voters who elect leaders unwilling to confront the crisis. The U.S. addiction to fossil fuels is not merely an economic dependency; it is a cultural one, rooted in the American ideals of [abundance, convenience, and individualism](#). Breaking this cycle requires not just policy change, but a fundamental shift in societal values — a shift that seems increasingly unlikely in the face of entrenched political and corporate interests.

As the late cartoonist Walt Kelly famously wrote, “We have met the enemy, and he is us.”

The Road to Collapse

The next four years will be a critical inflection point — but not in the hopeful sense of turning the tide. With the Trump administration poised to accelerate fossil fuel production and dismantle environmental protections, the United States is committing itself irrevocably to a path that leads to ecological and societal collapse. The policies on the horizon will not only deepen the existing climate crisis but will ensure the entrenchment of systems that prioritize short-term profits over long-term survival.

The consequences of this trajectory will unfold in cascading disasters: intensifying wildfires, more frequent and devastating hurricanes, widespread droughts, and the displacement of millions as rising seas consume coastlines. These are no longer distant possibilities but imminent certainties, playing out with increasing ferocity every year. The global ecosystem, already teetering on the brink, is being pushed past its breaking point by the relentless pursuit of fossil fuel extraction.

This trajectory is not merely the result of [political or corporate malfeasance](#). It is the culmination of decades of [willful ignorance](#), institutional inertia, and cultural complacency. Americans’ insatiable demand for cheap energy and disposable convenience has made them complicit in the destruction of the planet’s life-support systems. Meanwhile, politicians, beholden to an energy sector awash in lobbying dollars, have consistently chosen to [prioritize corporate interests](#) over the public good. The fossil fuel industry, shielded by subsidies and a lack of accountability, has successfully positioned itself as untouchable, its influence pervading every corner of governance.

As the incoming administration dismantles the few remaining checks on fossil fuel expansion, the last illusions of climate responsibility will fall away. The oil and gas industry will surge forward, emboldened and unrestrained, leaving a legacy of poisoned water, unbreathable air, and a climate spiraling toward chaos. This is not a moment of decision. The decision has been made, and the road to collapse is paved with pipelines, oil rigs, and abandoned wells.