

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, January 14, 2015

Contact: Cassandra Carmichael, 443-822-3720 or cassandra@nrpe.org

Faith Groups Voice Support to Address Methane Emissions

Washington, D.C. – Almost a dozen national religious organizations from various faith traditions commented on the announcement today by the Obama administration to reduce the oil and gas industry’s waste of methane, the primary component of natural gas, by 40 to 45 percent below 2012 levels by 2025. The administration announced actions across federal agencies that will secure important reductions in harmful methane pollution and help make progress toward addressing methane emissions.

“Our tradition teaches us that together God created the world and entrusted all of us to care for it,” said Rabbi Steve Gutow, Chair of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment and President of the Jewish Council on Public Affairs. “Now, we are doing the opposite. Every year, the United States releases billions of metric tons of greenhouse gas pollutants into the atmosphere, changing the climate and the world as we know it. We are pleased that the President and his Administration are focused on tackling the tough problems, including methane leaking into the atmosphere. Through the regulatory process, we look forward to working with the President, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Department of the Interior to develop sensible rules to reduce the pollution of this potent greenhouse gas.”

“We applaud the Obama administration for its commitment to tackling methane emissions and to caring for God’s creation - including our most vulnerable neighbors,” said Mary Minette, director for environmental education and advocacy, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. “Methane is not only a major contributor to climate change, it also contributes to air pollution. Reducing methane emissions from oil wells, gas wells and pipelines will not only help our country to address climate change, but will also have long term benefits for the health of our communities.”

“Columban Missionaries throughout the world witness the devastating effects of climate change on marginalized communities daily,” said Scott Wright, director of Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach, which represents the social justice priorities of the Missionary Society of St. Columban in the United States. “We support the initiative by the Obama Administration to reduce harmful methane gas emissions, and view this as a positive step forward by our leaders to protect God’s creation and people.”

The Rev. J. Herbert Nelson, director of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Office of Public Witness, stated, “we know that God is calling us to address global climate change in a way that keeps faith with this and future generations. Methane is a greenhouse gas that is frequently overlooked in comparison to carbon dioxide, despite the fact that methane is more potent as a greenhouse gas. We must take aggressive steps, in our personal choices, at the community level, and through our government, to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, not just carbon, and to reduce our contribution the man-made threat that is climate change. The Presbyterian General

Assembly has committed: ‘we will stand with ‘the least of these’ and advocate for the poor and oppressed in present and future generations who are often the victims of environmental injustice and who are least able to mitigate the impact of global warming which will fall disproportionately on them.’”

“Coupled with the Clean Power Plan, regulating methane emissions is a necessary component of reducing our US emissions and combating climate change,” stated Tricia Bruckbauer, program director for Creation Justice Ministries, an ecumenical organization representing the Creation-care policies of 38 Christian denominations including mainline Protestant, Baptist, Orthodox, and peace churches. “Enacting standards for methane is completely in line with our Christian mission and we applaud the Administration for taking this step.”

“As Reform Jews, we have a commitment to pass on our tradition *l’dor v’dor*, from generation to generation,” said Rabbi Jonah Pesner, the director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. “So too, must we pass on the earth that we have been given to generations that will succeed us, tilling and tending as humankind was told to ‘till and tend’ in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15). Now is a pivotal moment where we can take steps to ensure that our children and grandchildren inherit a habitable earth, free from the devastation of climate destruction. We welcome President Obama’s plan to put forward a strategy to limit methane gas emissions, a key contributor to climate change, and we look forward to a formal proposal later this year.”

Gerry Lee, director of the Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns, which represents U.S. Catholic men and women serving impoverished communities around the world, said in a statement, “As Pope Francis travels to the Philippines this week and the site of Typhoon Haiyan, he calls the Church and global community to respond to the serious moral issue of climate change. Methane emissions, especially from oil and gas operations, contribute significantly to global climate change. We applaud the Obama Administration’s efforts to reduce methane emissions by 40 to 45 percent by 2025. This is an incredibly important step towards reducing our overall greenhouse gas emissions.”

“Interfaith Power & Light is pleased to see that the Obama administration is doing the right thing by moving to address dangerous methane pollution,” said Rev. Canon Sally G. Bingham, president of Interfaith Power & Light. “Low cost technology exists to fix a problem that is exacerbating climate change and wasting energy. Addressing methane leaks from the oil and gas industry is the smart, just and moral thing to do. The Administration’s announcement of a first ever requirement to reduce methane 45% by 2025 is encouraging and achievable. While today’s announcement is a big step forward, these regulations must be followed by strong standards to regulate existing wells, pipelines, and facilities. Our faith communities want to see the kinds of action that is needed to truly protect Creation and avoid catastrophic climate change. Curbing methane pollution is a big part of it and we are pleased to see the Administration moving forward with this critical first step.”

“The Friends Committee on National Legislation is pleased by the Administration’s pledge to cut methane emissions from the oil and gas sector by 40 – 45 percent from 2012 levels by 2025,” said Diane Randall, executive secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation. “This is a

vital stepping in protecting God's creation and vulnerable communities from harmful greenhouse gas emissions known to contribute to climate disruption.”

“The National Religious Partnership for the Environment and its partners recognize the impacts of climate change as a moral issue,” said Cassandra Carmichael, executive director of NRPE, an alliance of religious organizations and institutions committed to caring for God's Creation. “Because greenhouse gases such as carbon and methane contribute to climate change, it is important that action be taken to reduce these types of gases.”

Faith groups who issued full statements following the Administration's methane announcement include Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns, Jewish Council for Public Affairs, Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism, and Creation Justice Ministries. Several major faith organizations sent a letter to Obama on October 27, 2014, calling on the administration to develop a national methane strategy. Additional statements and the October 27th letter are online at www.nrpe.org.

###

The National Religious Partnership for the Environment is an alliance of religious organizations and institutions committed to caring for God's Creation including the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and its affiliated programmatic arm the Catholic Climate Covenant, the Evangelical Environmental Network, the National Council of Churches and its affiliated programmatic arm Creation Justice Ministries, and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs and its affiliated programmatic arm the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life.