Tom Schumann drafted this blog post.

As previously announced, the Interior Department has published its proposal to roll back an Obama-era regulation aimed at reducing climate change-causing methane releases from oil and gas operations on federal lands. The Obama-era regulation—commonly known as the methane rule—would (1) limit the amount of methane produced by wells that could be flared and vented; (2) impose measures to prevent leakage during transportation and storage; and (3) require operators to monitor and repair leaks. The proposed rule would rescind all of these provisions. It would also potentially relax the conditions under which methane release would count as waste subject to royalties, replacing enumerated exceptions with a negligence standard. Altogether, the proposed rule would essentially return regulation of methane in oil and gas production to 1979, the last time that regulations were updated.

The methane rule has dwelt in the crosshairs of congressional Republicans and the Trump Administration since it was promulgated in November 2016. In February 2017, the House approved a joint resolution that would have repealed the rule under the Congressional Review Act. In a surprise, the Senate narrowly failed to deliver the concurrence necessary for repeal when it voted on the resolution in May, after Senators Collins, Graham, and McCain broke party ranks to oppose it. Meanwhile, President Trump ordered a review of the rule as part of his March executive order on American energy independence. In December, the Interior Department issued a final rule delaying the effectiveness of provisions in the methane rule not yet in force and suspending certain provisions currently in force. That delay and suspension was enjoined by the Northern District of California on February 22, the same day that Interior proposed the permanent repeal of the methane rule.

The public may comment on the proposed rule here. The comment period closes April 23.