

PSR Colorado Newsletter – March 2023

Welcome to our Winter Newsletter! We hope you will enjoy it and that you will share it with friends, family and colleagues. We welcome your feedback.

Read further to find out about upcoming events, good news both small and large, and ways you can be involved.

AT THE CAPITOL

Climate Lobby Day



PSR Colorado Coordinator Lauren Swain, 2nd from left, among activists visiting the office of Sen. Julie Gonzales, 4th from left, on Climate Lobby Day.

On February 10, PSR Colorado joined 350 Colorado in hosting a Climate Lobby Day at the Capitol. Together, we educated our state legislators about priority bills that will help mitigate the climate crisis and protect public health. Former Senator Mike Foote and Senator Chris Hansen shared their perspective on how to speak effectively with your legislators. Participants learned about priority bills, participated in a practice session and then went to the Capitol to meet legislators.

Watch for our legislative action alert regarding significant bills being introduced this session.

IN THE COMMUNITY

Jewish Climate Summit

Board members Sharon Montes, MD, and Harv Teitelbaum presented on Healthy Electric Homes at the Colorado Jewish Climate Action (CJCA) Summit on February 5, informing the audience about gas stove pollution and heat pumps. We are looking forward to future collaboration and are grateful to the organizers.

BPUF Environmental Justice Community Series



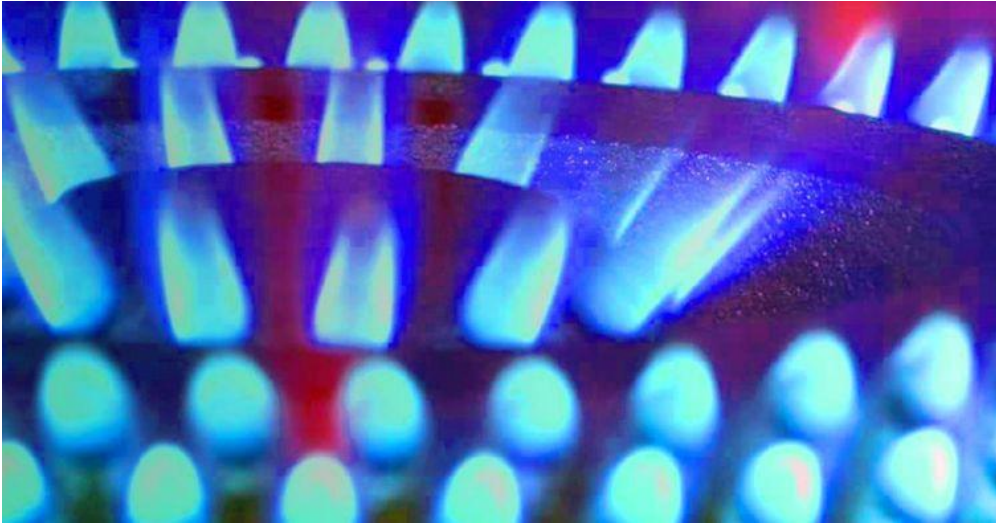
Photo: L to R: Lauren Swain, PSR Colorado; Shaina Oliver, Moms Clean Air force; Kristi Douglas, Commerce City Council Member; Lucy Molina, BPUF organizer; Shere Walker, BPUF Executive Director

PSR Colorado coordinator Lauren Swain and Mac Prather of Denver's office of Climate Action Sustainability and Resiliency (CASR) presented at the February gathering of the Black Parents United Foundation's (BPUF) Environmental Justice Community Series at Brother Jeff's Cultural Center. Lauren spoke on the numerous health harms of gas stoves and what can be done. Mac updated all on the City's collaboration with Energy Outreach Colorado and BlocPower to decarbonize 200 low-income households in Denver. The program will focus on households where one or more members have respiratory conditions. Dr. Genevieve Duran, policy writer and trainer, gave a presentation on what policy is and how it happens and will be guiding community members in developing policy related to pollution and asthma in their neighborhoods.

See more on p.7 under [GOOD NEWS](#).

GETTING GAS OUT OF OUR HOMES

Webinar: Health Harms from Gas Stoves



As new research reveals more about the health harms from gas stove emissions, health professionals and organizations are becoming increasingly concerned. Recently the American Public Health Association issued a policy statement: [Gas Stove Emissions Are a Public Health Concern: Exposure to Indoor Nitrogen Dioxide Increases Risk of Illness in Children, Older Adults, and People with Underlying Health Conditions](#).

Watch our latest webinar, [Cooking with Gas: Health Harms from Gas Stoves, held January 25, 2023](#). This webinar featuring PSR National's gas stoves expert Zach Williams and PSR Colorado coordinator Lauren Swain provides timely information about the dangerous air pollutants emitted by gas stoves, what they do to the human body, and what you can do to reduce your and your family's risk of exposure - as well as related state and local health and climate equity advocacy opportunities. You can watch the webinar here and we hope you will share this with friends and colleagues:

[Webinar: Health Harms from Gas Stoves 1-25-23](#)

Calling for No Gas in New Homes in Denver

In December, PSR Colorado joined allies from the Building Electrification Coalition in initiating a last-ditch effort to urge the Denver City Council to amend the proposed new building code to exclude gas hookups in new home construction. The new commercial building code that will go into effect in May will require space and water heating in apartments, but it would continue to allow gas hookups to new single-family homes.

Building Electrification Coalition members feel strongly that the increasing evidence of the adverse health impacts of gas stoves on health, new incentives for electrifying homes under the Inflation Reduction Act, and new tax-credits passed by the state legislature have increased the viability and value of all-electric homes. The Code needs rethinking.

The Council failed to add provisions requiring all-electric single-family homes for the time being, but there will be room for amendments after it goes into effect.

Thanks to our PSR Colorado health professionals who wrote letters to their City Council members and to Council Member Jolon Clark for championing this effort and informing the public that this is *not* a ban on gas appliances. Read more here:

[Denver considers ban on natural gas appliances/stoves in new homes](#)

STOPPING OIL & GAS PERMITTING

Frack of the State Rally



Photo: L to R: Shaina Oliver, Moms Clean Air Force; Barbara Donachy, PSR Colorado Board; Lucy Molina, 350 Colorado; Lauren Swain, PSR Colorado Coordinator

As Governor Polis gave his 2023 State of the State address on January 17th, about 100 people joined the "Frack of the State" rally on a cold and gray day at the Capitol to protest the Polis Administration's failure to adequately protect Coloradans' health, climate and environment and to make the Colorado public, state legislature, local officials, and media aware of the large number of new residential fracking permits being approved by the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC). Watch media coverage [here](#).

PSR Colorado and our allied groups and members called on state legislators and the Governor to ensure that Coloradans have healthy, safe, and livable air quality, water supplies, and climate conditions by actively opposing residential drilling permits and supporting a phasing out of oil and gas permitting by 2030 or sooner.

Sandra Steingraber, Ph.D., biologist and co-author of The Compendium of Scientific, Medical, and Media Findings Demonstrating Risks and Harms of Fracking, provided this comment for the event press release: "We banned fracking in New York because it posed a major public health risk. Fracking operations threaten drinking water sources with toxic spills and leaks, emit hazardous and radioactive air pollutants, send plumes of climate-wrecking methane into our atmosphere, and are a proven cause of earthquakes. Coloradans should

understand that fracking is inherently violent and chaotic. It is not safe for human health or the climate, and it can't be made safe through any regulatory framework. I hope you will be successful in protecting your communities from fracking operations near homes and schools and in demanding an end to all permitting as soon as possible."

Phase out gas drilling permits by 2030!

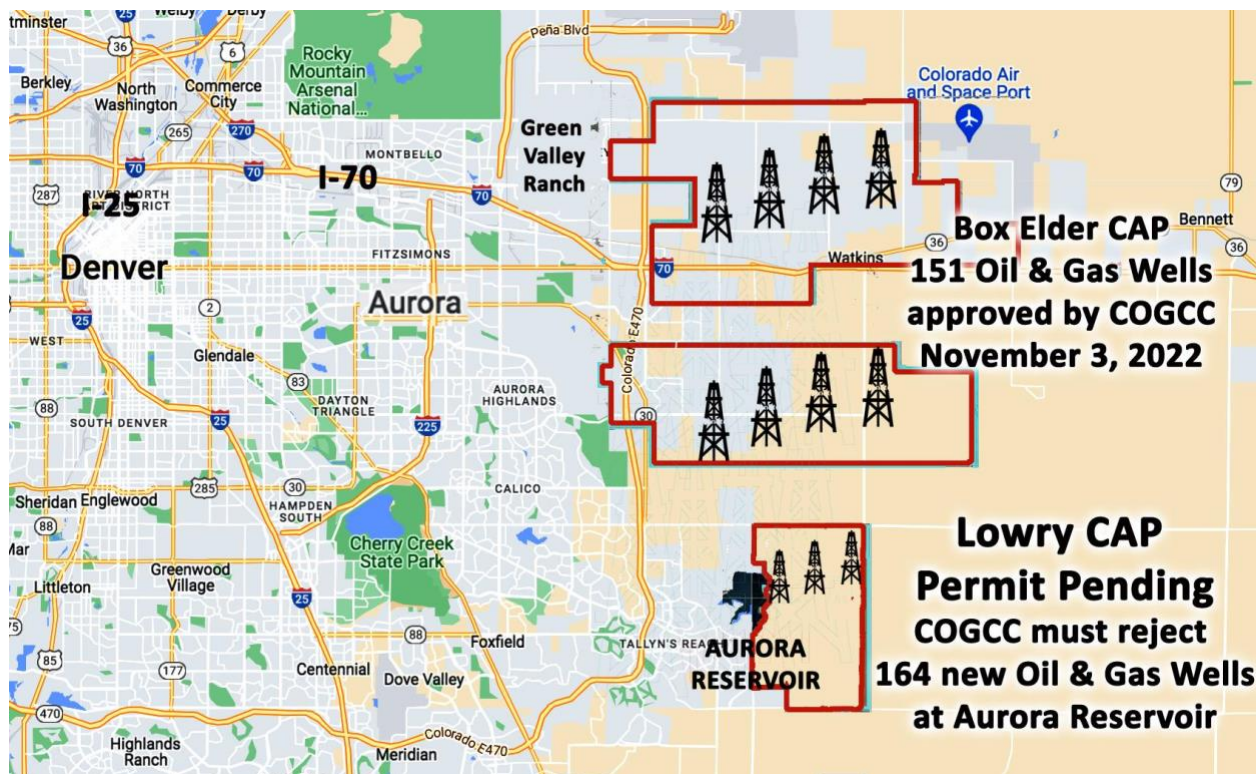
Big thanks to all PSR Colorado members and allies [using our alert](#) to urge their legislators to sign on to an open letter of support for the phasing out of new oil and gas permits by 2030 and a just transition to a clean renewable energy future and to speak out now against the approval of more drilling permits near communities in our Front Range Ozone NonAttainment area. This area includes numerous disproportionately impacted communities (DIC) in Aurora, Weld County, and Commerce City.

This map shows the massive Box Elder Comprehensive Area plan approved by the COGCC in November 2022 for 151 wells to be drilled and fracked next to disproportionately impacted Denver and Aurora communities, as well as future permits that allied [neighbors are fighting near Aurora Reservoir](#).

Despite Gov. Polis' assertions that passage of SB19-181 would "end the oil and gas wars", the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) has approved permits for over 4,500 new oil and gas wells and denied only one since the bill passed, despite protests from the impacted communities.

The COGCC is poised to approve thousands more wells in residential communities in 2023, including the ‘Lowry Ranch’ site with up to 174 wells in Aurora, the ‘Centerra’ site in Loveland, and more in Commerce City, which is already suffering from the Suncor refinery’s pollution.

We had a record number of responders with close to 100 letters generated to legislators. We will keep the pressure on.



UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO SCHOOL OF MEDICINE STUDENTS

Welcome Service Learning Students!

We are excited to welcome our new SLS. All are 1st year medical students at CU Anschutz who share our concerns for the environment and health. Here's a bit about each of them.

Tyler Cohan: *I'm starting to get involved in more advocacy activities relating to LGBTQ health, flavored tobacco guidelines, and I'll hopefully be serving as a representative for our class at national meetings for medical students. I am very interested in LGBTQ rights, global health, as well as environmental health issues surrounding climate change and environmental justice have been some of my greatest interests and passions for a while.*

Emily Hay-Arthur: *I'm from Fort Collins and did my undergraduate at CU Boulder. I love to ski this time of year and play tennis when it's warmer. As far as career goals, I have no idea what specialty I see myself in, but I hope to incorporate some aspect of advocacy and research in my future endeavors. I am passionate about equal representation and sustainability.*

Songhee Han: *I majored in earth systems in college, so the mission of PSR Colorado is near and dear to my heart. I was also an educational guide at a biological preserve, so I'm always open to learning about natural spaces. Like Emily, I'm also open to exploring different specialties and I definitely want to incorporate public health advocacy and research into my career.*

Noah Keime: *I grew up in South Dakota and went to college in Nebraska! In my free time I enjoy painting, drawing, running, skiing, and hanging out with friends. I am super excited to learn a bit more about PSR Colorado and how we can use our role as physicians to create environmentally friendly policies.*

Dustin Fykstra: *I'm originally from a small town in Iowa. I spent a year in Boston doing neuroscience research before coming to Colorado. I am very interested in environmental justice and the role physicians have in informing policies.*

Owen Zielinski: *My interests as they relate to advocacy and service learning mainly involve creating sustainable change on an individual level that can then be translated for large populations. I'm currently interested in neurology and psychiatry and am interested in working in the community or a hospital system over private practice. I chose PSR Colorado because this is an area that I have limited experience in.*

Noah, Emily, Songhee and Tyler will be working with Healthy Electric Homes on advocacy, social media, and public education efforts. Dustin will be working on medical curriculum, and Owen will be working on Rocky Flats/nuclear issues.

Farewell to our 2021-22 UC School of Medicine Service Learning students

We send our thanks and deep appreciation to Bridget Foy, Nicholas Do and Reilley Knott, our departing service learning students. We wish them well on their continuing journey.

JUST TRANSITION

Just Transition Roundtable

PSR Colorado board member Dr. Velma Campbell and PSR Coordinator Lauren Swain have been participating in a newly formed Just Transition Roundtable. The Roundtable invited representatives from different groups to draft recommendations to share with legislators. The Just Transition Roundtable Recommendations Report has already been shared with some legislators.

A related bill introduced by Representatives Amabile and Dickson (HB 23-1074) has been introduced. The bill, if passed, will require contracting with a third party to study workforce transitions in Colorado's economy, with a focus on oil and gas workers and also workers impacted by automation. You can find the full bill text [here](#). This is a huge win and we hope that our recommendations will help to inform the bill as it works its way through the legislature!

Watch for the full report.

GOOD NEWS

- Bloc Energy and Energy Outreach Colorado have been contracted by the City of Denver for a pilot project to retrofit 200 low-income homes in Denver. Households will be selected based on a household member with respiratory disease.
[City and County of Denver Partners, BlocPower and Energy Outreach Colorado, Collaborate to Implement a New Healthy Homes Program](#)
- PSR Colorado received a \$5000 grant from the Wolcott Family Foundation (WOLFF) to help us expand our work. Many thanks to them for their vote of confidence.
- Last year PSR Colorado ran an ad in the Boulder Hometown Weekly encouraging those who had lost their homes in the Marshall Fire to rebuild electric. We hope our effort contributed to the good news that even those who had protested green building codes are now choosing to rebuild sustainably anyway: [Marshall fire victims protested green building codes as too expensive. Now a majority are voluntarily adopting them.](#)

BAD NEWS

While more cities move toward building electrification, and Xcel touts its wind turbines and decarbonization efforts, this article shows that the company is a prominent force behind [Coloradans for Energy Access](#) — a non-profit dedicated to fighting a growing movement to shift buildings from natural gas heat to renewable electricity, donating \$80,000 to the organization in 2022 Read more here:

[Xcel Energy played a leading role in a stealthy plan to defend natural gas in Colorado](#)

COMING UP: ACTIONS TO INFORM, EMPOWER AND ENGAGE

March 19: No New Fracking 2030

March 19, 6 to 9 PM

First Baptist Church of Denver

1373 Grant Street

Action party hosted by our favorite allies.

https://www.facebook.com/events/922195228917127?active_tab=about

April 12: Hydrogen Blending Webinar

Watch for our upcoming webinar. Blending hydrogen into the existing gas system for use in home appliances could lock in methane gas use for decades to come while increasing health and safety risks. Gas utilities across the nation, including Xcel, push hydrogen blending as an alternative to electrification for decarbonizing homes and buildings.

NOW: Sign on letter for health professionals

PSR National has written a sign-on letter for medical, health and public health professionals, voicing concern over the **health effects of exposure to indoor air pollution from gas stoves** and urging Congress to support the Consumer Product Safety Commission in investigating those risks and taking action. Links to both the [letter](#) and the [sign-on page](#) are here.

May 5-7 Cinco de Mayo

Come visit us at our booth at Denver's Cinco de Mayo celebrations in Civic Center Park. Better yet, contact us at info@psrcolorado.org to volunteer to help! This is a fun event and wonderful public outreach opportunity.

Thanks to all of you interested in PSR Colorado and what we are striving to do. Please share our newsletter and also visit our website and social media sites and share them as well.