



## **GarCo: Air pollution from drilling differs from west to east**

By Dennis Webb  
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Garfield County commissioners are supporting Colorado's consideration of new rules limiting air pollution from oil and gas development, but are calling for caution in how they might deal with ozone constituents.

In a letter from commissioners to the state Air Quality Control Commission, they said they generally support the "basis and need" for its new rulemaking. But they warn of possible unintended consequences of proposed rules addressing ozone constituents, and said the commission should consider the costs vs. benefits of a statewide approach to ozone, and ensure such an approach would produce tangible benefits.

"What goes on in western Colorado is very different air quality-wise than the Front Range," Garfield Commissioner Tom Jankovsky said Monday as commissioners reviewed their comment letter.

The Front Range has struggled with air standards thanks to all of its automobile traffic, he said.

"I would hate to see western Colorado held to the same standard that potentially the Front Range would be for air quality," he said.

Garfield County hasn't had an ozone problem. But the Rangely area in Rio Blanco County has. Ozone readings last winter there put the county on track to be officially found in violation of federal standards this year, in what will be a first for anywhere in western Colorado.

Oil and gas emissions, mostly in nearby northeastern Utah, are suspected as the likely cause.

Jeremy Nichols with the conservation group WildEarth Guardians said the Rangely situation provides clear evidence that more needs to be done to address oil and gas air pollution.

State regulators will consider making Colorado the first state to specifically target methane — a potent greenhouse gas — for detection and reduction in oil and gas operations.

The state's proposal also would cut volatile organic compound emissions by about 92,000 tons a year, more than what is produced by all cars in the state in a year.

Nichols said his group will support the proposal but also call for its strengthening, especially when it comes to monitoring, preventing and fixing equipment leaks.

He also takes issue with Garfield's idea of different standards for different parts of the state.

"When it comes to public health there shouldn't be inequality. All (residents) should get the same protection," he said.

Garfield oil and gas liaison Kirby Wynn said one question is whether proposed leak testing requirements for wells make sense in the case of remote wells that are hardly producing.

“A little common sense could go a long way,” Garfield Commissioner Mike Samson said of the new rules.