

**To:** Jackson, Ryan[jackson.ryan@epa.gov]  
**From:** POLITICO Pro Energy Whiteboard  
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**Subject:** EPA watchdog to evaluate agency methane estimates

By Alex Guillén

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EPA's inspector general has launched an inquiry into how the agency estimates methane emissions from the oil and gas industry, according to a [notice](#) signed today.

Investigators will focus on two specific objectives, according to the notice. The first is "the extent to which" EPA incorporated data from two studies conducted by the Environmental Defense Fund and the University of Texas at Austin dating from 2013 and 2014. The second is whether "technical concerns" about those studies "were identified or brought to the EPA's attention, and how the EPA addressed and resolved any such concerns."

"This project should provide value to the EPA, states and the public by assessing whether selected methods the EPA uses to estimate methane emissions are valid," the notice says.

The notice does not specify who requested the inquiry, but it appears to be connected to a [request](#) made last year by NC Warn, a North Carolina climate change nonprofit, which alleged the studies were part of a "persistent and deliberate cover-up" to downplay industry emissions and avoid stronger regulations. Its request also [received backing](#) from a coalition of environmental groups, including the Center for Biological Diversity, Food & Water Watch, Climate Hawks Vote and Beyond Extreme Energy.

**WHAT'S NEXT:** EPA's inspector general will review EPA's use and review of the studies. There is no specific timetable to complete the inquiry, but the process likely will take months.

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