



COLORADO

**Energy & Carbon Management
Commission**

Department of Natural Resources

April 2026

Former ECMC Director Brian Macke sees the agency’s history as “a story of two Colorados.”

To Brian Macke, former ECMC director, the agency’s history is a "story of two Colorados." He described the first Colorado as a thinly populated state focused on farming, ranching and natural resource development. The second Colorado emerged from the rapid population growth and urbanization in the 1990s, as the state’s industries and viewpoints grew more varied. As this new Colorado took shape, Macke ushered in a massive regulatory shift mandated by Senate Bill 94-177 — the largest overhaul of agency rules before the recent "Mission Change" initiated by SB 19-181.

A graduate of the Colorado School of Mines, Macke served the agency for 17 years, from 1990 to 2007. He began his career as a field engineer in Grand Junction, later serving as deputy director for 10 years and finally as director for four years. During his tenure, Colorado’s population surged from approximately 3.3 million people in 1990 to more than 5 million by 2010. As subdivisions sprawled over fields historically used for oil and gas extraction, ECMC expanded to meet the growing need for oversight, growing from just 26 employees when Macke was hired to more than 200 today.

In 1994, the Colorado General Assembly passed SB 94-177, reorganizing the Commission’s composition, powers and duties. For the first time, the Commission was explicitly authorized to regulate oil and gas operations to prevent and mitigate significant adverse environmental impacts. Although the agency's mission was still to "foster" development at the time, this legislation led to substantially elevated environmental standards. Practices that are now standard

— such as the reclamation of well sites, financial assurances and reasonable advance notice to surface owners — were written into regulations for the first time.

Macke played an instrumental role in implementing these changes, and his achievements were many: As Deputy Director, he led a stakeholder group of local governments, environmental groups and industry officials to draft Colorado's first thorough rules for environmental reclamation. In fact, during his tenure the COGCC established the Local Government Designee program. The first-of-its-kind program ushered in new opportunities for the participation of local officials in COGCC processes. He also co-chaired the Northwest Colorado Oil and Gas Forum to educate residents and directly address community concerns. Macke strongly advocated for the transition from the old, almost obsolete hardware and software to the modern web-based data system that is now used daily by countless ECMC stakeholders. This important change, which was cutting-edge for its day, continues to be heralded by many as the premier state oil and gas agency data system in the United States.

When Macke left the agency, there were 110 rigs actively drilling new wells. Today, there are only 15 active drilling rigs. The significance of this decrease is reinforced by an important fact: Macke guided the agency as the last director with a technical background in engineering and geology. Since his time, the state's requirements and the agency's direction have shifted, transitioning from one Colorado to another.