Duke Study Links Fracking to Water Contamination As EPA Drops Study on Fracking Water Contamination

We repost the following article from Desmogblog.com with permission. It will only be a matter of time before Michigan's well water resources become contaminated by shale gas drilling and horizontal fracturing. Michigan has more private water wells *than any other state in the nation. And as one of the researchers put it in* Duke University's press release*: "The question is what is happening in other shale gas basins." That's a question we'd like answered. But don't expect it from the University of Michigan "study." They are doing just a literature review. And meanwhile, this outrage by the EPA, selling out the people of Pavilion, Wyoming. --BMF*

By Steve Horn

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Last week, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) kicked the can down the road on a key study designated to examine the connection betweenhydraulic fracturing ("fracking") and groundwater contamination in Pavillion, Wyoming.

A study originally scheduled for release in 2014 and featured in Josh Fox's "Gasland 2," it will not be complete until 2016 in a move that appears to be purely politically calculated by the Obama Administration, akin to the EPA's dropped and censored groundwater contamination study in Weatherford, TX.

Now, just days later, a damning study conducted by Duke University researchers published in the*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* again links shale gas fracking to groundwater contamination. The Duke researchers did so by testing samples of 141 drinking water samples of Pennsylvania's portion of the Marcellus Shale basin.

This is the Duke professor's third study linking fracking to groundwater contamination, the source of drinking water for hundreds of thousands of citizens in the Keystone State. The industry is likely to come out with the familiar chorus that the contaminated water is "naturally occuring," but the latest Duke study shows otherwise.

"They found that, on average, methane concentrations were six times higher and ethane concentrations were 23 times higher at homes within a kilometer of a shale gas well," a Duke University press release explains. "Propane was detected in 10 samples, all of them from homes within a kilometer of drilling."

Robert Jackson, a professor of environmental sciences at Duke's Nicholas School of the Environment and one of the study's co-authors, pointed to the the fact that some of the contaminated water samples exhibited the chemical signature of Marcellus Shale gas.

"The methane, ethane and propane data, and new evidence from hydrocarbon and helium content, all suggest that drilling has affected some homeowners' water," said Jackson. "In a minority of cases the gas even looks Marcellus-like, probably caused by poor well construction."

The Duke study offers food-for-thought in the hours leading up to President Obama'sforthcoming announcement of a climate change legislative plan at Georgetown University, just a month after his Bureau of Land Management adopted the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) model bill for fracking chemical fluid disclosure on public lands.

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