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EPA Announces Final Study Plan to Assess Hydraulic Fracturing

Congressionally directed study will evaluate potential impacts on drinking water

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today announced its final research plan on hydraulic fracturing. At the request of Congress, EPA is working to better understand potential impacts of hydraulic fracturing on drinking water resources. Natural gas plays a key role in our nation's clean energy future and the Obama Administration is committed to ensuring that we continue to leverage this vital resource responsibly.

In March 2010, EPA announced its intention to conduct the study in response to a request from Congress. Since then, the agency has held a series of public meetings across the nation to receive input from states, industry, environmental and public health groups, and individual citizens. In addition, the study was reviewed by the Science Advisory Board (SAB), an independent panel of scientists, to ensure the agency conducted the research using a scientifically sound approach.

The initial research results and study findings will be released to the public in 2012. The final report will be delivered in 2014. To ensure that the study is complete and results are available to the public in a timely manner, EPA initiated some activities this summer that were supported by the SAB and provide a foundation for the full study.

The final study plan looks at the full cycle of water in hydraulic fracturing, from the acquisition of the water, through the mixing of chemicals and actual fracturing, to the post-fracturing stage, including the management of flowback and produced or used water as well as its ultimate treatment and disposal. Earlier this year, EPA announced its selection of locations for five retrospective and two prospective case studies.

This administration continues to take steps to ensure that we can rely on this abundant resource for decades to come, including taking steps to fully understand any impacts related to the development of this resource. This study is in line with the priorities identified in the president's Blueprint for a Secure Energy Future, and is consistent with the Secretary of Energy Advisory Board recommendations on steps to support the safe development of natural gas resources.

More information: www.epa.gov/hydraulicfracturing

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