

## WBR ARTICLE

### EPA Administrator tours Jonah Field

By MJ Clark

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PINEDALE — The state plane touched down in Pinedale's airport yesterday, delivering Gov. Dave Freudenthal and EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson to the final leg of their energy tour of Wyoming. The two joined a handful of reporters on a minibus for an up-close tour of natural gas development in the Jonah field.

As the minibus bounced south on Highway 191, EnCana representatives passed around a microphone, explaining the history of the Jonah Field, and the challenges of removing the 13 trillion cubic feet of recoverable gas that lies 9 to 12,500 feet beneath it.

The difficulty in extracting the gas from the Jonah Field lies in the composition of the rock where the gas is found. Prehistoric sandbars have compressed into 'really tight' sandstone with low porosity that does not allow the gas to flow through it to reach the wells. "Concrete sidewalks are much more porous than this rock," explained Jeff Johnson, team lead of Jonah Operations for EnCana.

In order to loosen the rock and free the gas, developers use a process called hydraulic fracturing, which uses a highly pressurized mixture of water plus a gelling agent (guar gum and borax) to create fractures in the rock radiating out from the borehole. The fractures are then propped open by replacing the water mixture with sand so that the gas can flow through the fractures to the well. According to Johnson, the nearly 1 million gallons of water used in creating each well, is 100 percent recycled water – not fresh water. And, over the life of a well, 90 percent of the water used is recovered.

The two concerns that Jackson had were the potential of oil and gas development to negatively impact the water supply, and air quality.

"There are lots of stories about people wanting to do good, who end up harming the water supply," Jackson said. "I am concerned with the people who will be here after you've gone."

"Today is a beautiful day," she said, gazing across the Jonah Field towards the snow-capped Wind River Range, "But that's the thing about air pollution. It's not always the same every day, and it's not always the stuff that you can see that you have to address."

During her energy tour, Jackson emphasized the Obama administration's desire to improve the economy and end dependence on foreign energy, while protecting the environment.