

# Encana asks EPA to suspend Pavillion report public comment period

By JEREMY FUGLEBERG Star-Tribune energy reporter | Posted: Tuesday, January 10, 2012 8:00 am

The operator of Wyoming's Pavillion natural gas field has asked the Environmental Protection Agency to halt the review process on its report that tentatively blames hydraulic fracturing for groundwater contamination there.

The EPA is "moving too quickly" with its review of the report and needs to release more information, Encana Corp. said in a letter sent to the agency's Office of Research and Development on Friday.

The EPA should "suspend the public comment period" until the agency releases more data that underpins the report and explains its plans, said John Schopp, vice president of Encana's North Rockies Business Unit, in the letter obtained by the Star-Tribune on Monday.

Once the EPA releases the data, the agency should then "start the clock over" for 90 days of public comment, Encana spokesman Doug Hock said.

"We don't believe we have the full data that is needed to truly provide full comment on the study," he said.

In the letter, Encana asked the EPA to clarify its request for comments officially published on Dec. 14. The agency should make clear if comments should address methods used by the agency or specifically deal with the Pavillion site, Encana wrote.

The company requested more information from the EPA under the Freedom Of Information Act on Dec. 21, but has yet to hear back from the EPA about that request, Hock said.

Encana wants the raw data used for the report, including a full release of information describing how the EPA drilled, completed and tested its deep monitoring wells in the Pavillion field.

Those two wells, along with a number of private wells, provided the samples examined by the EPA for the report.

"What Encana essentially seeks is the same information, and all of it, that the EPA had in hand when it went to prepare the Pavillion report," Encana said in its letter.

Steve Jones, watershed protection program attorney with the Wyoming Outdoor Council, disagreed with the charge that the EPA's official notice wasn't sufficiently clear.

"I think it's pretty clear," Jones said. "The EPA is not asking us to interpret the entrails of a chicken here. They've done a scientific investigation and now they want peer review and public comments on the validity of the report."

The EPA released the controversial draft report early last month and set a 45-day public comment period that is due to end Jan. 27.

The EPA has received Encana's letter and is reviewing it, agency spokesman Richard Mylott said.

Hydraulic fracturing, also known as fracking, involves pumping pressurized water, sand and chemicals underground to fracture rock and open pathways for oil and natural gas.