

Encana refutes EPA release on Pavillion water

By Business Report Staff



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DENVER - Yesterday, Encana Oil & Gas (USA) Inc. filed a release that "strongly disagrees with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's preliminary conclusions" revealed in the draft report on the groundwater study in the Pavillion natural gas field.

The main objection raised by the corporation was that many of the EPA's findings from the two deep monitoring wells, including those related to any potential connection between hydraulic fracturing and Pavillion's groundwater quality, "are conjecture, not factual and only serve to trigger undue alarm," Encana says. The company also called the release of the data before subjecting it to qualified, third-party scientific verification "precipitous."

"These preliminary conclusions do not stand up to the rigor of a non-partisan, scientific-based review, and that is of paramount importance to every natural gas-producing community, every citizen and business that relies on natural gas and every industry worker," said Eric Marsh, Encana's executive vice president, Natural Gas Economy & senior vice president, USA Division.

"Safe and responsible natural gas development is vital to North America's energy security, and hydraulic fracturing is an important, necessary and safe part of natural gas development," Marsh said.

The release cited numerous discrepancies in the EPA's approach including:

- Historic reports of poor-quality water in Pavillion. The first report was made by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in the 1880s. Then in 1959, the USGS documented Pavillion water as unsatisfactory for domestic use due to high concentrations of naturally occurring sulfate, total dissolved solids and pH levels, which commonly exceed state and federal drinking water standards.
- The fact that the EPA's two deep wells (783-981 feet) were drilled into a natural gas reservoir, where finding natural gas components is "an entirely expected result ... Natural gas developers didn't put the natural gas at the bottom of the EPA's deep monitoring wells, nature did."
- The EPA's reported results of all four phases of its domestic water well tests *do not* exceed federal or state drinking water quality standards for any constituent related to oil and gas development.
- Inconsistencies in the test results. Data is not repeatable and the sample sets used to develop these preliminary opinions are inadequate. Several of the man-made chemicals detected in the EPA deep wells have never been detected in any of the other wells sampled. The chemicals were, however, detected in many of the quality control (blank) samples — which are ultra purified water samples commonly used in testing to ensure no contamination from field sampling procedures. These two observations suggest a more likely connection to what it found is due to the problems associated with EPA methodology in the drilling and sampling of these two wells.

For more on the developing situation in Pavillion, watch for the January issue of the *Wyoming Business Report*.