



GROUND WATER PROTECTION COUNCIL

June 8, 2005

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman
Environment and Public Works Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James Jeffords
Ranking Senator
Environment and Public Works Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Senator Jeffords

The Ground Water Protection Council (GWPC) has been engaged for several years in the public dialogue concerning the hydraulic fracturing of coal bed methane gas formations and the subsequent disposal of produced water. The following comments are offered with regard to S.1080 and reiterate the GWPC's view that any additional regulation of hydraulic fracturing as underground injection mandated upon the state regulatory agencies is unnecessary, redundant, a misuse of time and money, and would take already strained state resources away from field activities that truly are environmental protection and oversight.

As the front line regulators of the state oil and gas UIC program, we have not seen credible evidence that the hydraulic fracturing of coal bed methane reservoirs, or any other deeper formations, causes any documented threat to underground sources of drinking water. The states have maintained oversight of hydraulic fracturing as a part of the oil and gas production process. This makes good regulatory sense and has stood the test of time for over 50 years. Any requirement to regulate this process as underground injection would not result in any additional environmental protection of under ground sources of drinking water (USDW) and, it would strain already depleted state UIC resources. The result would be that money that could be used to solve severe contaminant source problems, such as urban storm water or large capacity cesspools, would be diverted to a practice that is already regulated under another program and is not a threat to USDWs.

For FY 2006 the proposed annual federal budget for the entire national UIC program is only \$10.0 million which must be divided among all 50 states, territories, and tribes for the entire national UIC program. That equates to less than \$5.00 per well when spread across the inventory of all types of UIC wells, (Class I, II, III, and V). There is documented evidence of contamination of ground water caused by class V (industrial septic systems) yet these "UIC wells" go essentially uninventoried, uninspected, and continue to cause real environmental damage. We do not support another new layer of federal regulation to the UIC program, when there are more essential environmental protection needs.

We are eager to work with you and the supporters of S. 1080 to promote a policy that truly addresses significant threats to ground water and limit any diversion of effort and resources to concerns that do not pose any discernable risk. Please feel free to contact the GWPC if you have any questions or would like to learn about how you can help States prevent contamination of ground water.

Sincerely,

Thomas P Richmond
GWPC President