

Pavillion & the EPA The Facts

Pavillion, Wyo., has featured prominently in the debate over hydraulic fracturing, thanks mainly to a single draft Environmental Protection Agency report from December 2011. It theorized a link between hydraulic fracturing and water contamination, but criticism of EPA's work from state and federal officials, as well as subsequent testing, show EPA's original theory was inaccurate.

 **FACT:** The U.S. Geological Survey has documented poor water quality in the Pavillion area since the 1960s. The culprits vary from naturally occurring compounds to pesticide and agriculture runoff.

 1991 **USGS:** "Dissolved-solids concentrations in all water samples ... were 2 to 14 times greater than the Secondary Maximum Contaminant Level of 500 mg/L set by the EPA."

 1989 **USGS:** "The ground water in Fremont County was **ranked the fourth most vulnerable to pesticide contamination in Wyoming.** ... At least one pesticide was detected in 13 of the 20 wells sampled in Fremont County."

 **FACT:** EPA's draft report prompted criticism from state regulators and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and subsequent USGS testing **uncovered different results.**

 2012 Don Simpson, a high ranking BLM official, suggested EPA's testing could have introduced "**bias in the samples,**" adding that the data "**should not be prematurely used as a line of evidence** that supports EPA's suggestion that gas has migrated into the shallow subsurface due to hydraulic fracturing or improper well completion until more data is collected and analyzed."

 **FACT:** EPA agreed to retest the wells, and the USGS was tapped to do its own sampling.

 2012 More than 50 separate measurements from the USGS **differed from EPA's results.** The USGS also effectively disqualified one of only two monitoring wells used by EPA, due to low flow rates and poor construction.

 **FACT:** Pavillion's drinking water wells are typically less than 300 feet deep. But EPA officials drilled its two monitoring wells to almost 1,000 feet, potentially reaching shallow hydrocarbon deposits.

 2012 One would expect to find hydrocarbons in a monitoring well that was **drilled below the aquifer and into a hydrocarbon reservoir.** Fittingly, the test results from the area's shallow drinking water wells don't match what the EPA claims it found in the deep monitoring wells.

 **FACT:** In late 2011, then-EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson said: "We have **absolutely no indication right now that drinking water is at risk.**" After the report's release, Jackson told reporters, "In no case have we made a definitive determination that the fracking process has caused chemicals to enter groundwater."

 **FACT:** In June 2013, EPA announced it was dropping its plan to have independent scientists review its findings and turned over the work to state regulators.



1960s

USGS documents poor water quality in Pavillion Area



1991

EPA finds high dissolved solids concentrations in Pavillion water.



2011

EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson: "We have absolutely no indication right now that drinking water is at risk."



2013

EPA drops investigation. Hands it over to WDEQ.



2016

WDEQ concludes fracking is not the cause of poor water quality in Pavillion.



1989

USGS ranks Fremont County 4th most vulnerable to pesticide contamination



2008

EPA begins investigation into fracking impacts in Pavillion.



2011

EPA releases draft report on Pavillion.



2012

WDEQ finds issues with EPA's monitoring wells.



2015

WDEQ finishes its 30-month investigation.

