

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 20, 2016

The Honorable Gina McCarthy
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator McCarthy:

We are writing about the draft Assessment Report of Potential Impacts to Drinking Water Resources from Hydraulic Fracturing for Oil and Natural Gas (draft Assessment Report). We urge you to accept the recommendations of the EPA Science Advisory Board's (SAB) extensive review of the draft Assessment Report and ask that the agency finalizes the draft Assessment Report before the end of the year.

The SAB's review (Review) found EPA's approach to the June 2015 draft Assessment Report "to be comprehensive but lacking in several critical areas." The Review starts its summary of key findings and recommendations by expressing concerns about some national-level conclusions that "appear inconsistent with the observations, data, and levels of uncertainty presented and discussed in the body of the draft Assessment Report. Of particular concern in this regard is the high-level conclusion statement on page ES-6 that 'We did not find evidence that these mechanisms have led to widespread, systemic impacts on drinking water resources in the United States.'"¹

The unsupported statement had an outsized impact on the EPA's communications about the draft Assessment Report, and on the ensuing media coverage. Indeed, the EPA's press release about the draft Assessment Report took the statement significantly further, saying, "hydraulic fracturing activities in the U.S. are carried out in a way that have [sic] not led to widespread, systemic impacts on drinking water resources."² The final Assessment should clarify the statement to be consistent with the SAB recommendation to justify or delete it.

The SAB Review highlights numerous additional critical areas in which the draft Assessment Report could be improved. In particular, the draft Assessment Report "fails to bring forward important findings on the relationships between the Hydraulic Fracturing Water Cycle and reported impacts to public and private wells and surface water supplies including private wells in

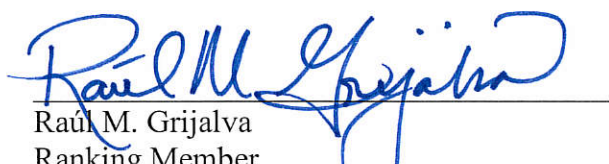
¹ U.S. EPA. "SAB Review of the EPA's draft Assessment of the Potential Impacts of Hydraulic Fracturing for Oil and Gas on Drinking Water Resources." August 11, 2016
[[https://yosemite.epa.gov/sab/sabproduct.nsf/LookupWebReportsLastMonthBOARD/BB6910FEC10C01A18525800C00647104/\\$File/EPA-SAB-16-005+Unsigned.pdf](https://yosemite.epa.gov/sab/sabproduct.nsf/LookupWebReportsLastMonthBOARD/BB6910FEC10C01A18525800C00647104/$File/EPA-SAB-16-005+Unsigned.pdf)]

² U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). [Press release]. "EPA Releases Draft Assessment Report on the Potential Impacts to Drinking Water Resources from Hydraulic Fracturing Activities." June 4, 2015.
[<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-releases-draft-assessment-potential-impacts-drinking-water-resources-hydraulic>]

Dimock, Pennsylvania; Pavillion, Wyoming; and Parker County, Texas.” The Review points out the draft Assessment Report’s claim that spills from hydraulic fracturing do not pose a substantial risk to drinking water” is not supported or linked to data presented in the body of the draft Assessment Report.” It calls for the inclusion of more toxicological information, analysis “of the most likely exposure scenarios and hazards associated with hydraulic fracturing activities,” and the use of more prospective case studies. These and other key findings and recommendations are thoroughly justified in the text of the SAB Review.

Demand for ample, clean water supplies is only going to grow. Threats to clean water access impact current generations as well as those that follow. We urge you to follow the recommendations of the SAB.

Sincerely,


Raúl M. Grijalva
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources

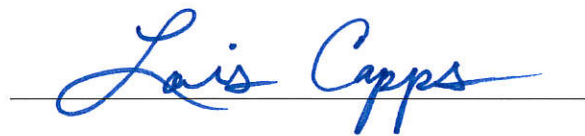










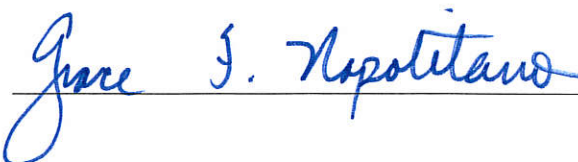












Dwight D.

Patricia Murphy

M. R.

Alan Grayson

Brian Watson Blenan

Ted W. Lien

Jim Langerini

Ann E. Murphy

Joe E. Lerner

Jim Van Horn

Nedra J. Kline

Jan Schuck

Jim V. Aris

Judy Ann

William B. Schiff

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