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Sent: Friday, April 06, 2012 10:26 AM
To: mtammaro@rtenv.com
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EPA LESSENS FRACK WATER QUALITY CONCERNS

Press Release

The Environmental Protection Agency has dropped its claim that an energy company contaminated drinking water in Texas, the third time in recent months that the agency has backtracked on high-profile local allegations linking natural-gas drilling and water impacts.

On Friday, the agency told a federal judge it withdrew an administrative order that alleged Range Resources Corp. had polluted water wells in rural Texas county west of Fort Worth. Under an agreement filed in U.S. court in Dallas, the EPA will also drop the lawsuit it filed in January 2011 against Range, and Range will end its appeal of the administrative order.

In addition to dropping the case in Texas, the EPA has agreed to retesting of water in Wyoming after its methods were questioned. And in Pennsylvania, it has angered state officials by conducting its own analysis of well water-only to confirm the state's finding that water once tainted by gas was safe.

A growing number of industry, academic and environmental experts say that while drilling can cause water contamination, that can be avoided by proper use of cement seals and other safety measures.

By year's end, the EPA is set to release initial results of a study on the impact on water of hydrofracturing, or fracking, which involves using a high-pressure mixture of water, sand and chemicals to break apart energy-rich rocks and release gas.

EPA officials declined to comment on their broader efforts to regulate gas drilling. But in a statement, the agency said that settling with Range, "allows EPA to shift the agency's focus in this particular case away from litigation and toward a joint effort on the science and safety of energy extraction." The agency said it and Range would continue to monitor wells and share data.

Range is pleased the EPA has not found that its drilling was responsible for gas in water wells, said Matt Pitzarella, a Range spokesman.

The intense environmental debate on gas drilling will now hopefully begin to settle down. There are some drilling incidents of concern, but most gas drilling is

completed without incidents or any significant environmental impact. We think that perhaps less reactionary regulation of oil and gas drilling could accomplish reasonable and needed environmental objectives.

- Gary R. Brown, P.E., 610-265-1510 Ext. 234 or email gbrown@rtenv.com.

[Excerpts from Wall Street Journal - by Daniel Gilbert and Russell Gold, 3/31-4/1/2012]



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