

Energy in Depth

Sierra Club Once Again Denies Science on Fracking and Groundwater

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In a not-so-surprising move, Sierra Club issued a [statement](#) last week disregarding the [findings of a recent United States Geological Survey \(USGS\) study](#) that found fracking is NOT impacting groundwater in three major U.S. shale plays.

And just what was Sierra Club's issue with the report's findings? Sierra Club claims USGS "failed to include in its analysis the Marcellus Shale, the country's largest gas reserve." This particular study was purely focused on three shale plays located in the Gulf region of the U.S.; however, USGS has conducted [several studies](#) on Pennsylvania and the Marcellus since 2012 and has a Marcellus-specific study planned for this year, as [E&E News recently explained](#).

Sierra Club also tried to pass blame off on President Trump's administration, claiming the study, which was conducted from 2015 to 2016 under the Obama administration, "seems to be part of a troubling trend from this administration of attempting to erase science that is inconvenient for their friends in the fossil fuel industry."

What the Sierra Club does not dispute — that actual findings of the study — just so happens to be the only thing that really matters.

This study [echoes](#) the topline conclusions of an already [overwhelming list](#) of peer-reviewed papers — seven from government agencies — concluding hydraulic fracturing is [not a major threat](#) to drinking water.

That list of research includes last month's Duke University (and Natural Resources Defense Council funded) [study](#) that found fracking "has not contaminated groundwater in northwestern West Virginia." It is also in line with the conclusions of the recently finalized U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) five-year [study](#), which found no evidence of widespread water contamination of drinking water from fracking. In addition to those two examples, the most notable examples of studies showing fracking is not a threat to groundwater are:

- **Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, 2016** ([study link/EID blog](#)).
- **Townsend et al., 2016** ([study abstract link/EID blog](#)).
- **Ladage et al., 2016** ([study link/EID blog](#)).
- **Bureau of Economic Geology, University of Texas at Austin, 2016** ([study link/EID blog](#)).
- **Siegel et al., 2016** ([study link/EID blog](#))
- **Jackson et al., 2015** ([study link/EID blog](#))
- **Drollette et al., 2015** ([study link/EID blog](#))
- **Siegel et al., 2015** ([study link/EID blog](#))
- **Birkholzer et al. 2015** ([study link/EID blog](#))
- **Hammack et al., 2014** ([study link/EID blog](#))
- **Kresse et al., 2013** ([study link/EID blog](#))
- **Flewwelling et al., 2013** ([study link/EID blog](#))
- **Molofsky et al., 2013** ([study link/EID blog](#))
- **U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2012** ([report link/EID blog](#))
- **Cardno Entrix, 2012** ([study link](#))
- **Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Energy Initiative, 2010** ([study link](#))