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## USGS Study Adds to Overwhelming Evidence that Fracking is Not Significant Threat to Drinking Water

by Seth Whitehead, Energy in Depth

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) released a [study](#) Wednesday that [echoes](#) the topline conclusions of an already [overwhelming list](#) of peer-reviewed papers concluding hydraulic fracturing is [not a major threat](#) to drinking water.

After randomly sampling 116 water wells across the Eagle Ford, Fayetteville and Haynesville shale plays — and using chemical, isotopic, gas and groundwater-age tracers to thoroughly evaluate those samples — USGS researchers concluded that low concentrations of methane and benzene detected were likely naturally occurring



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and not attributable to shale development. From the study,

“Methane isotopes and hydrocarbon gas compositions indicate most of the methane in the wells was biogenic and produced by the CO<sub>2</sub> reduction pathway, not from thermogenic shale gas.

“UOG [unconventional oil and gas] operations **did not** contribute substantial amounts of methane or benzene to the sample drinking-water wells.”

The study comes on the heels of 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.

The USGS research, conducted from 2015 to 2016, found that groundwater sampled contained “little (<1%), if any, water from the Eagle Ford, Fayetteville, or Haynesville Shales,” based on isotopic analysis.

“Groundwater samples had water isotopic compositions that plotted on or near global or local meteoric water lines (SI Figure S8 ), whereas shale water was isotopically enriched compared to groundwater from the same study area.”

The researchers also note that, “The data indicate the UOG plays were not important sources of methane in the sampled wells.”

And though the researchers found levels of benzene in relatively high frequencies, it is essential to note that they attributed it mostly to natural sources and found concentration levels to be very low,

“The highest benzene concentration detected in any water sample was 0.127 μ g/L (HV29, 2015 sample; SI Table S5 ), **nearly 40 times lower than the 5 μ g/L federal drinking-water standard.**”

“Of the nine samples with benzene detections, only FV (Fayetteville sample site) 12 contained benzene that could be from a surface release associated with UOG production activities based on its groundwater age.”

Along with the recent Duke and EPA studies, this USGS report adds to the long list of reputable studies showing fracking **does not** pose a credible threat to drinking water. The most notable examples are listed below.

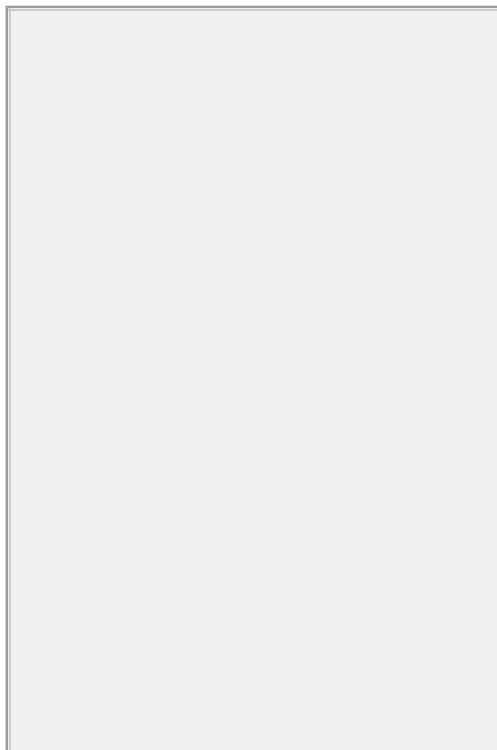
- **Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, 2016** ([study link/EID blog](#)).
- **Townsend et al., 2016** ([study abstract link/EID blog](#)).
- **Ladage et al., 2016** ([study link/EID blog](#)).
- **Bureau of Economic Geology, University of Texas at Austin, 2016** ([study link/EID blog](#)).
- **Siegel et al., 2016** ([study link/EID blog](#)).
- **Jackson et al., 2015** ([study link/EID blog](#)).
- **Drollette et al., 2015** ([study link/EID blog](#)).



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- 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](#))

As the above list of research has already confirmed and EID has noted on numerous occasions, the science on fracking's drinking alleged drinking water impacts has been settled for some time. The new USGS study just adds to already overwhelming evidence that shale development does not pose the widespread, systemic threat activists have long claimed.

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**TOP 5 POSTS OF THE WEEK**

[Super Laterals Are Spreading From Utica and Marcellus Shale to Other Plays](#)  
 From Seeking Alpha: The shift towards longer laterals in shale development is a broadly



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recognized industry trend. It is worth noting, ho...

### [July 2017 Utica and Marcellus Shale Activity Maps](#)

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### [Belmont County Cracker Plant Moves Closer to Becoming a Reality](#)

From WTOV News : The future of the proposed cracker plant is looking brighter in Belmont County. We've just learned PTTGC has purchased...

### [Utica Rig Count Drops One on Latest ODNR Report](#)

New permits issued last week: 6 (Previous week: 8 ) -2 Total horizontal permits issued: 2533 (Previous week: 2526 ) +7 Total...

### [Utica Rig Count Hits Highest Level Since 2015 on Latest ODNR Report](#)

New permits issued last week: 8 (Previous week: 3 ) +10 Total horizontal permits issued: 2526 (Previous week: 2518 ) +8 Total...



#### **BUSINESS WIRE ENERGY: OIL/GAS NEWS**

- [Harmony Files Definitive Proxy Statement, Schedules Stockholder Vote on NextDecade Merger for July 24](#)
- [Customer Focus Earns ComEd "Most Trusted Brand" Recognition](#)
- [PG&E Ranks in Top Five, Leads California in New Nationwide Energy Efficiency Scorecard](#)
- [Romania Ana-Doina Project Panorama Oil and Gas Upstream Analysis Report 2017 - Research and Markets](#)
- [Q1 2017 Long-Term LNG Contracts Review: US Signs Two LNG Export Contracts - Research and Markets](#)

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- [Oil and Gas Glossary - learn the terminology of the oil industry](#)
- [Oil and Gas Jobs](#)
- [Shale FAQs](#)
- [Marcellus Drilling News](#)
- [Southwest Coshocton Landowners Association](#)
- [Utica Shale Maps](#)

#### BLOG ARCHIVE

##### ▼ 2017 ( 211 )

##### ▶ July ( 9 )

##### ▼ June ( 40 )

[06/29/17 Links of the Day: Rover Asks FERC to Appr...](#)

[API Releases 50-State Analysis of Natural Gas Bene...](#)

[Stanford Geophysicist Debates Fracking with Anti-D...](#)

[Bloomberg Chronicles the Rover Pipeline Constructi...](#)

[DOE to Invest \\$20 Million in New Oil and Gas Resea...](#)

[Chemical Plants Helping to Revive Youngstown Manuf...](#)

[Permitting Slow in Utica Shale; Rig Count Holds St...](#)

[Shale Efficiency May Have Hit Its Peak For Now](#)

[Utica Rig Count Drops One on Latest ODNR Report](#)

[Eclipse Resources Goes Long Again with Third "Supe...](#)

[EQT to Acquire Rice Energy, Become Largest Gas Pro...](#)

[Ohio Laborers Report More Than 4 Million Work Hour...](#)

[Fallout From Rover Pipeline Spills Includes Constr...](#)

[EPA Puts Methane Rule on Hold to Conduct a Review](#)

[Are Conditions Ripe for Oil and Gas Mergers?](#)

[Ohio Nuclear Plant Bailout Stumbles in Statehouse](#)

[PA Landowners Continue Fight Over Chesapeake's Und...](#)

[Hamilton County Residents Hurl Accusations, Voice ...](#)

[NEXUS Pipeline Project Ready to Go, Awaiting Feder...](#)

[Agency Instrumental to Shale Boom Slated for Budge...](#)

[After Several Defeats, Activists in Youngstown Hop...](#)

[Utica Rig Count Hits Highest Level Since 2015 on L...](#)

[Utica Shale Production in the 1st Quarter of 2017:...](#)

[Epic Fail: Anti-Fracking Activists' Attempt at #NO...](#)

[ODNR Releases 1st Quarter 2017 Utica Shale Product...](#)

[Activists Continue Fight Against Rover Pipeline](#)

[Rover Pipeline Part of Expansion of Short Line Rai...](#)

Fracking Contributes to Big Savings at the Pump fo...  
OEPA Raises Fine Proposal to \$914,000 After Findin...  
Updated Shale Activity Maps for June 2017 Publishe...  
Utica Rig Count Drops for Second Straight Week as ...  
Sierra Club Once Again Denies Science on Fracking ...  
Jefferson County Anticipating Increased Oil and Ga...  
Rice Energy Facility in Belmont County Visited by ...  
USGS Study Adds to Overwhelming Evidence that Frac...  
Oil Price Uncertainty Continues as OPEC's Plan is ...  
Out of State Activists Bring Their Travelling Tour...  
FERC Denies Rover Pipeline Drilling Request; Compa...  
Chesapeake Energy Benefits From Pennsylvania Court...  
Tax Money From Texas Eastern Transmission Pipeline...

- ▶ [May \( 28 \)](#)
- ▶ [April \( 37 \)](#)
- ▶ [March \( 37 \)](#)
- ▶ [February \( 24 \)](#)
- ▶ [January \( 36 \)](#)
  
- ▶ [2016 \( 524 \)](#)
- ▶ [2015 \( 820 \)](#)
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- ▶ [2013 \( 1200 \)](#)
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