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# Nature defends natural gas story over EIA objections

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Eric Gav







Posted: Friday, December 19, 2014 12:21 pm | Updated: 12:27 pm, Fri Dec 19, 2014.

By Joshua Cain | Houston Chronicle |

1 comment

A Nature article from early December questioning how long the North American natural gas boom could really last earned stinging letters this week from federal and Texas researchers whose work was the basis for the

The letters from the U.S. Energy Information Administration and the University of Texas at Austin's Bureau of Economic Geology claimed that Nature's story, "Natural gas: The fracking fallacy," misrepresented data projecting natural gas production levels over the next three decades.

The story claimed the BEG's data showed that industry and EIA forecasts were too optimistic, and that natural gas production could decline sharply past 2020.

Nature defended the story, with features editor Richard Monastersky saying in an email to Fuel Fix that the journal "stands by its reporting and the accuracy of the news feature."

"It is appropriate for Nature to report on ongoing research into shale gas resources and to communicate information that it believes is in the public interest," Monastersky said. "Nature's article did discuss uncertainties in all such projections or forecasts, and noted that the EIA produces a variety of cases or scenarios.

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## North Dakota Oil Boom

Oil pump jacks work behind a natural gas flare, Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2014, near Watford City, N.D. (AP Photo/Eric Gay)

http://www.mrt.com/business/oil/article 06394fa2-87ac-11e4-b7ba-473111238335.html[1/16/2015 1:46:59 PM]

But EIA Deputy Administrator Howard Gruenspecht wrote that Nature's report was "filled with inaccurate and distorted reporting," and used the discrepancy between the two data sets to create "a (false) conflict meme." He said that EIA collaborates with research

groups like BEG to come up with ranges of scenarios for future natural gas production.

Both the EIA and BEG were critical of how the story leaned on comments from one researcher who worked on the study, Tad Patzek, the director of petroluem engineering at UT at Austin. Patzek said in the story that the Texas researchers' findings were "bad news" for the industry.

BEG Director Scott Tinker said in his letter that Patzek's role in the study was limited. And Gruenspecht noted in the EIA letter that Patzek was an advocate of the "peak oil" theory claiming that there's a ceiling on hydrocarbon production.

Monastersky said that Nature gave EIA the opportunity to respond to some of the issues that were later raised in its letter, but didn't get a response.

Gruenspecht downplayed the role of EIA's data projections in serving as forecasts for the industry in an interview with Fuel Fix.

"These companies are investing tens of millions of dollars in what they do. I'm sure they do their own work," Gruenspecht said.

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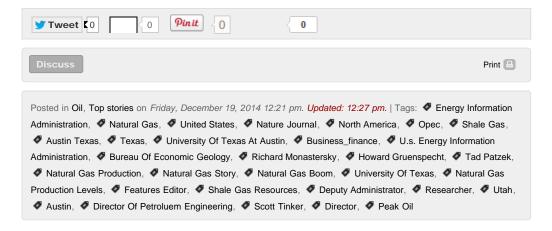
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