

Wastewater with Toxic Chemicals from Oil and Gas Drilling Rigs for Consumption by Wildlife and Livestock

By [Global Research News](#)

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Millions of gallons of water laced with toxic chemicals from oil and gas drilling rigs are pumped for consumption by wildlife and livestock with the formal approval from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), according to [public comments filed yesterday](#) by [Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility](#) (PEER). Contrary to its own regulations, EPA is issuing permits for surface application of drilling wastewater without even identifying the chemicals in fluids used for hydraulic fracturing, also known as [fracking](#), let alone setting effluent limits for the contaminants contained within them.

The EPA has just posted proposed [new water discharge permits](#) for the nearly dozen oil fields on or abutting the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming as the EPA has [Clean Water Act](#) jurisdiction on tribal lands. Besides not even listing the array of toxic chemicals being discharged, the proposed permits have monitoring requirements so weak that water can be tested long after fracking events or maintenance flushing. In addition, the permits lack any provisions to protect the health of wildlife or livestock.

“Under the less than watchful eye of the EPA, fracking flowback is dumped into rivers, lakes and reservoirs,” stated PEER Executive Director Jeff Ruch, pointing out that in both the current and the new proposed permits the EPA ignores its own rules requiring that it list “the type and quantity of wastes, fluids or pollutants which are proposed to be or are being treated, stored, disposed of, injected, emitted or discharged.”

“Gushers of putrid, grayish water encrusted with chemical crystals flood through Wind River into nearby streams,” he added.

Surface disposal of water produced by oil and gas drilling is forbidden in the Eastern U.S. but allowed in the arid West for purposes of “agricultural or wildlife propagation,” [in the words of the governing federal regulation](#). Thus, the “produced water,” as it is called, must be “of good enough quality to be used for wildlife or livestock watering or other agricultural uses.”

In the last decade, fracking fluids often consisting of powerfully toxic chemicals have been included in this surface discharge. The exact mixture used by individual operators is treated as a trade secret. But one recent analysis identified 632 chemicals now used in shale-gas production. More than 75 percent of them affect the respiratory and gastrointestinal systems; 40-50 percent impact the kidneys and the nervous, immune and cardiovascular systems; 37 percent act on the hormone system; and 25 percent are linked with cancer or

mutations.

“Amid all the controversy on this topic, there is one point of agreement: Drinking fracking fluids is not a good idea,” added Ruch, pointing to cases where cattle drinking creek water contaminated with fracking fluids died or failed to produce calves the following year. “The more than 30-year old [‘produced water’ exception](#) was intended for naturally occurring fluids and muds from within the geologic formations, not this new generation of powerful chemicals introduced downhole.”

PEER is asking the EPA to rewrite the permits to regulate all the chemicals being discharged and to determine whether the “produced water” is potable for wildlife and livestock. The public comments period on the proposed Wind Reservation permits closes on July 26.

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