



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

JUL 23 2012

THE ADMINISTRATOR

Ms. Frances Beinecke
President
Natural Resources Defense Council
40 West 20th Street
New York, New York 10011

Dear Ms. ~~Beinecke~~ *Beinecke*:

As you know, we at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have been evaluating ways to strengthen stakeholder engagement in the EPA's study of the impact of hydraulic fracturing on drinking water. I appreciate the helpful thoughts you have offered on this subject, and I am pleased to share information on the steps we are taking.

Natural gas is critical to our nation's energy future. The Obama Administration is committed to ensuring that our natural gas resources are developed in a safe and responsible manner that protects America's communities. The EPA's study of the potential impacts of hydraulic fracturing on drinking water, which is being conducted at the direction of Congress, is an essential step in fulfilling that commitment.

The EPA designed and is conducting the study to meet the highest standards of scientific rigor, data quality and peer review. The EPA's study plan received extensive public comment and was thoroughly peer-reviewed by our independent Science Advisory Board.

As we proceed with the research outlined in the study plan, it is my goal to ensure that we are taking advantage of all the relevant expertise and peer-reviewed data outside the agency; obtaining timely and constructive technical feedback; clearly informing the public of the study's goals, design and progress; and keeping abreast of changes in industry practices and technologies that are relevant to the study and its ultimate conclusions.

With those key objectives in mind, I have directed the EPA staff to take several steps to increase engagement with stakeholders. The steps include periodic roundtables with invited experts from diverse stakeholder groups to review and obtain feedback on our principal research strategies; technical workshops to obtain expert views on discrete issues of methodology or data interpretation; regular opportunities for the public to submit relevant data for the EPA's consideration, including information on advances in industry practices and technologies; more frequent study updates to a wide range of stakeholders, including states, tribes, academia, nongovernmental organizations and industry; and opportunities to comment on the interim study report we will issue later this year.

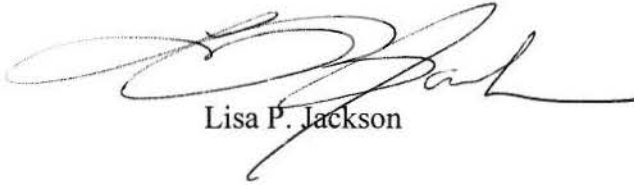
I wish to emphasize that the EPA has designated the study as a highly influential scientific assessment for purposes of applying our peer-review guidelines. Later this year, we will update our peer-review

plan to describe the steps we are taking to ensure peer review of the specific research products within the study. We also will form later this year a new Science Advisory Board panel that will consult periodically with the EPA on the study's progress and ultimately review the conclusions and findings in the 2014 report. Public-comment opportunities will be built into the workings of the panel.

During the first or second week of August, my EPA colleagues will schedule meetings with your organization to provide additional details on our planned actions.

In the meantime, I look forward to your support and participation as we continue to strengthen stakeholder involvement and move toward completion of this important study.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa P. Jackson', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Lisa P. Jackson