

Update on Hydraulic Fracturing Review

The provincial hydraulic fracturing review committee conducted further research on shale gas exploration in Nova Scotia and other jurisdictions. The committee has initiated an independent review of the associated risks of oil and gas operations, which will include activities such as hydraulic fracturing, to determine appropriate levels of insurance for onshore exploration activity. Committee members also attended a Synergy conference which brought together representatives from community, industry, government, municipalities, health professionals, and environmental groups to talk about synergistic approaches to energy and resource development in our communities.

The Canadian Society for Unconventional Resources (CSUR, formerly CSUG) recently released an educational document on the use, production and protection of water during development of oil and gas resources, with an emphasis on hydraulic fracturing. This technical document explains why unconventional resources may require the use of more water during drilling and stimulation operations. It also describes potential sources for this water and how improved technologies and procedures can decrease demands for fresh water. Water treatment, disposal and protection are also examined. To view this report visit:

http://www.csur.com/images/CSUG_publications/Understanding_Water_web.pdf

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has completed an updated review of issues associated with coalbed methane. "Coalbed Methane Extraction: Detailed Study Report, December 2010" focuses on typical contaminants in produced water, wastewater storage, treatment technologies and disposal options as well as potential environmental effects of surface or near surface discharges. To view this report visit:

http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/lawsguidance/cwa/304m/upload/cbm_report_2011.pdf

The EPA also recently announced the development of national standards for treatment of wastewater from coalbed methane and shale gas. These reflect the American government's concern that there is considerable variation between what is permitted at the state level and is in many cases being discharged with partial or no treatment into surface waters. This will provide direct links to discharges based on best available technologies and are proposed to be completed for coalbed methane in 2013 and shale gas in 2014. For more information, visit:

<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/bd4379a92ceceec8525735900400c27/91e7fadb4b114c4a8525792f00542001!OpenDocument>

The National Energy Board (NEB) published "A Primer for Understanding Canadian Shale Gas" in November 2009. This gives a comprehensive introduction into the history and technology of shale gas development with an emphasis on specific Canadian shale deposits. Although there is a limited discussion of potential environmental issues, it does note particular challenges associated with developing individual shale deposits and includes specific information on Nova Scotia. To view this report, visit: <http://www.neb-one.gc.ca/clf-nsi/rnrgynfmtn/nrgyrprt/ntrlgs/prmrndrstndngshlgs2009/prmrndrstndngshlgs2009-eng.pdf>