

Citizen's Guide to the EPA Hydrofracking & Drinking Water Hearings

How to be Effective in Two Minutes

The EPA's Science Advisory Board is doing a study of the effects of hydraulic fracturing (HF), or hydrofracking, on drinking water. The study is in its early stages as the EPA works out the bounds of their work. Over the next two months the EPA will hold a series of public hearings around the country to gather public input. Two documents (four pages each) provide guidance on the kind of information the EPA is seeking from the public. They are available here:

http://www.epa.gov/safewater/uic/wells_hydroout.html#meetings, and may have been attached with this guide if you received it via email.

This guide attempts to prepare you, the potential attendee, to be most effective in testifying before the EPA. These meetings are being run as hearings. This means that a court reporter is usually hired to record your every word. This is good as you don't have to worry about someone trying to capture the gist of what you said and potentially getting it wrong. The downside is that there's not usually a chance during the meeting to talk with the EPA staff. You can expect a short presentation at the beginning, and then hours of testimony from citizens like yourself, organizations and industry.

According to the EPA, each person testifying will be limited to two minutes to talk. Two minutes is a very short time. The average commercial break when you're watching TV is actually longer than two minutes. But that doesn't mean that you can't be effective or that you shouldn't bother to attend. Keep the following in mind to be most effective:

- ❖ The EPA is studying the effects of hydraulic fracturing on drinking water. They are not studying air quality effects, the number of trucks needed to drill, develop and close a well site or anything else not associated with effects on drinking water. Stick to the topic at hand so they consider and can use what you've said.
- ❖ The EPA does want to know about a number of items. They include:
 - Comments on their criteria for selecting case studies. For more details on the criteria, check here: http://www.epa.gov/safewater/uic/pdfs/hydrofrac_casestudies.pdf (This is a link to one of the documents referenced above.)
 - Specific questions the EPA would like the public to address include:
 - Are the proposed criteria appropriate?
 - Would you suggest revised or additional criteria?
 - Are there other research questions that a case study approach would be able to address?
 - Another question the EPA wants the public to address has to do with the fact that they intend to get out and study specific cases in the field. Nominated sites will likely fall into three categories:
 - Sites where hydraulic fracturing (HF) is being planned
 - Sites where HF is in progress
 - Sites where HF has already been completed

- If you know of a site you think they should study, you should discuss it and the reasons why in your testimony.
 - See page 4, Table 1 from the EPA detailing the kind of information they're looking for by following the link above.
- One of the criteria is the potential to leverage their work with other partners, including NGOs, industry, states, etc. If you belong to an organization that can offer assistance, you should cover this in your testimony.
- Another set of questions the EPA wants addressed comes from the second document referenced above and available here: http://www.epa.gov/safewater/uic/pdfs/hydrofrac_landscapemodel.pdf The EPA will be studying effects to water quantity and water quality. They would like you to address:
 - Can you suggest additional pathways of exposure that could impact drinking water resources from the hydrofracking process?
 - What are the most important processes and pathways of exposure that would adversely impact drinking water resources?
 - What current practices in your region do you think pose the most threat to drinking water resources from hydrofracking?
 - Can you provide data, studies, reports or other information to help the EPA assess the relative importance of these potential impacts?
- ❖ You're limited in the time you can talk, so:
 - Pick one or at most two items to discuss
 - If you have time, write out what you want to say and practice saying it in two minutes or less. Write or type it out double spaced so you can easily read it standing at a podium. It's harder to hear what someone is saying if they have to hold a paper up to their face to read. Avoid being that person.
 - Try to avoid talking really fast. If you have to talk fast to get through what you want to say, then you should consider dropping some portion of it. The only thing people remember when someone talks really fast is that they talked really fast.

Any of the questions above provides a lot to cover in two minutes. In addition to speaking at the hearing, you may have an opportunity to leave written materials with the EPA officials. You can also email written comments to hydraulic.fracturing@epa.gov or mail them to **Jill Dean, 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Mail Code 4606M, Washington, DC 20460**. Remember, as with what you say in oral testimony, to provide written materials that are on topic.

Finally, most people will likely stay for at least part of the time to hear what others have to say. Take advantage of the opportunity to introduce yourself to others. These days, many of us only know each other through conference calls and email lists. Many others may be getting involved for the first time. These meetings provide a chance to put faces to names and get more people actively involved. Take advantage of this opportunity!

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