

Trump Administration Repeals Obama Rule Designed to Make Fracking Safer

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Global Research, December 31, 2017
[EcoWatch](#) 29 December 2017

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Environment](#), [Law and Justice](#), [Oil and Energy](#)

The [Trump](#) administration is rescinding Obama-era rules designed to increase the safety of [fracking](#).

“We believe it imposes administrative burdens and compliance costs that are not justified,” the [Interior Department](#)’s Bureau of Land Management (BLM) wrote in a notice published Friday in the Federal Register.

The 2015 rule required companies drilling for natural gas and oil on public lands to comply with federal safety standards in the construction of fracking wells, to disclose the chemicals used during the fracking process, and required companies to cover surface ponds that store fracking wastewater.

The regulation, however, never took effect after a Wyoming federal judge [struck it down](#) last year.

Fossil fuel groups, which sued to block the Obama regulation, unsurprisingly [cheered](#) the decision.

“Western Energy Alliance appreciates that BLM under Interior Secretary [Ryan Zinke](#) understands this rule was duplicative and has rescinded it,” Western Energy Alliance President Kathleen Sgamma said in a release. “States have an exemplary safety record regulating fracking, and that environmental protection will continue as before.”

But environmentalists and public health advocates have long warned that fracking—which involves pumping large volumes of water, sand and chemicals underground to extract oil and gas—causes [groundwater contamination](#), [puts human health at risk](#) and releases the potent [greenhouse gas](#) methane.

“The Trump administration is endangering public health and wildlife by allowing the fracking industry to run roughshod over public lands,” Brett Hartl, government affairs director at the [Center for Biological Diversity](#), said. “Fracking is a toxic business, and that’s why states and countries have banned it. Trump’s reckless decision to repeal these common-sense protections will have serious consequences.”

Maryland, New York and Vermont have banned fracking. Ireland, France, Germany and Bulgaria have also [banned](#) the practice on land.

Here are some major findings of a 2016 [study](#) by [Environment America Research & Policy Center](#) on the impact of fracking on our environment:

- During well completion alone, fracking released 5.3 billion pounds of methane in 2014, a pollutant 86 times more powerful than carbon dioxide over the course of 20 years.
- Fracking wells produced at least 14 billion gallons of wastewater in 2014. Fracking wastewater has leaked from retention ponds, been dumped into streams and escaped from faulty disposal wells, putting drinking water at risk. Wastewater from fracked wells includes not only the toxic chemicals injected into the well but also naturally occurring radioactive materials that can rise to the surface.
- Between 2005 and 2015, fracking used at least 23 billion pounds of toxic chemicals. Fracking uses vast quantities of chemicals known to harm human health. People living or working nearby can be exposed to these chemicals if they enter drinking water after a spill or if they become airborne.
- At least 239 billion gallons of water have been used in fracking since 2005, an average of 3 million gallons per well. Fracking requires huge volumes of water for each well—water that is often needed for other uses or to maintain healthy aquatic ecosystems.
- Infrastructure to support fracking has directly damaged at least 675,000 acres of land since 2005, an area only slightly smaller than Yosemite National Park. Well pads, new access roads, pipelines and other infrastructure built for fracking turn forests and rural landscapes into industrial zones.

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