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AFRICAN AMERICAN

EPA Public Meeting In Denver Focuses On Fracking (*Back Enterprise Magazine*)

DENVER (AP) — The Environmental Protection Agency on Tuesday was holding the second of four public meetings to gather comments about an upcoming study of how drinking water might be affected by a method of extracting natural gas.

The decades-old process — called hydraulic fracturing, or fracking — pumps water and chemicals underground at high pressure to help extract trapped oil and natural gas. The fluids break open fractures in shale formations, and sand or another substance is pumped in to keep the fractures open. The fluids then returns to the surface, and natural gas flows from the fractures into a well.

Fracking has been around for decades, but amid a natural gas drilling boom, members of Congress have questioned whether it could taint drinking water or harm human health. Critics said a 2004 EPA study that found no evidence of threats to drinking water was flawed.

The EPA doesn't regulate fracking, leaving it to states. U.S. Reps. Diana DeGette and Jared Polis, both Colorado Democrats, are among those pushing for federal oversight.

Besides potential effects on drinking water, critics have raised concerns including whether fracking, which can use millions of gallons of water, could deplete aquifers.

America's Natural Gas Alliance, an advocacy group for the gas industry, submitted comments last week that, in part, supported focusing the study on effects on drinking water. It also sought input on the makeup of EPA study and advisory panels.

"History demonstrates that hydraulic fracturing can generate abundant, secure energy supplies, without adverse consequences to drinking water," alliance President and CEO Regina Hopper said in a letter to the EPA.

Las Animas County resident Tracy Dahl, though, suspects that his southern Colorado well that has produced clean, clear drinking water for the last seven years was muddied by fracking at an adjacent property June 30.

"That evening, we checked the cistern and there was 500 gallons of murky, nasty water where it had always been clean before," said Dahl, 51. "Seems to me to be a pretty direct correlation. Whether we can prove it or not is another matter."

He said he is now driving 80 miles roundtrip to Trinidad to get drinking water.

"I saw this coming years ago. I was petitioning every politician I could think of to try to come up with stronger regulations to prevent this. Then to have to just see it happen anyway, it's

fantastically frustrating," said Dahl, a technical specialist in renewable energy who was set to testify Tuesday.

The EPA held its first public meetings on the study last week in Fort Worth, Texas. Other meetings are scheduled July 22 in Canonsburg, Pa., and Aug. 12 in Binghamton, N.Y.

Online:

http://www.epa.gov/safewater/uic/wells_hydrofrac.html

UN Eyes Private Help In $100 Billion Climate Aid (*Black Enterprise Magazine*)

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — A pledge by rich nations in Copenhagen to provide as much as $100 billion a year of climate-related aid to developing countries by 2020 may depend in part on the generosity of private donors and other non-governmental sources.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said Tuesday that his panel of advisers — seeking ways to fulfill a U.N. climate summit's pledge in the Danish capital last December — was considering private sources to deliver some of the aid promised to help developing countries deal with rising sea levels, drought and other effects of rising temperatures.

The panel chaired by prime ministers Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia and Jens Stoltenberg of Norway have been meeting this week to devise ways to set up a $30 billion annual fund by 2012 that would increase to $100 billion a year by 2020.

The panel also includes billionaire George Soros, White House economic adviser Lawrence Summers, the president of Guyana and ministers from Britain, France, Mexico, Singapore and South Africa.

"The challenges will be great," Ban told reporters. "They have to first of all identify the sources of resource — whether it comes from public funding or private funding. I suspect that to generate $100 billion, both private and public funds would be necessary."

He did not specify, however, what sort of private funds might be sought — individual, corporate or other sources.

Ban's advisory panel on climate financing said it plans to submit a final report in October on how to set up the fund.

Separately, Chris Huhne, Britain's energy and climate secretary, told reporters that private finance would be "absolutely key, because so much of the mitigation agenda is about what is effectively a new industrial revolution in all of our countries, in the developing world and the developed world."

He said the financing options under consideration include grants and aid from rich nations, some forms of government, bank or private lending and new taxes on shipping or aviation.

The fund was a key part of the nonbinding "Copenhagen Accord," an agreement brokered by U.S. President Barack Obama with China and others that signaled a new start for rich-poor cooperation on climate change.

The accord urged deeper cuts in emissions of carbon dioxide and other gases blamed for global warming, but did nothing to demand them. The next hoped-for step, a legally binding international treaty requiring further emissions cuts by richer nations, remains an elusive goal of U.N. negotiations.

"Frankly, if we don't get the finance credibly right, if we don't come up with a set of packages or a package which the developing countries can clearly see is a real, effective, credible effort to meet the commitments that we've made, then I don't think that there is going to be a global deal," Huhne said.

One of most concrete actions was the pledge by richer nations to finance a $10 billion-a-year, three-year program to fund poorer nations' projects to deal with drought and other climate-change impacts, and to develop clean energy.

They also set a "goal" of mobilizing $100 billion-a-year by 2020 for the same adaptation and mitigation purposes.

Among those most affected by rising temperatures, the 11 nations that make up the Pacific Small Island Developing States expressed frustration Tuesday over the pace of progress in getting the promised climate aid.

The group said in a statement it fears the aid will get held up in "bureaucratic red tape" or the promised "new and additional" money from rich nations will wind up being existing development aid that is simply repackaged.

Minorities See Little Green in BP Oil Spill Jobs (*The Root*)

By: Brentin Mock
Posted: July 13, 2010 at 6:59 AM
Already hit hard by the Gulf disaster, blacks and Asians have not benefited from the money flow in the cleanup effort.

Ever since the BP oil spill disaster began, a glut of contracts and jobs has surfaced. But who is benefiting? If you got an oil spill contract from the federal government, more than likely you are white. If you're not white, and you're fortunate enough to be working in the oil cleanup, then

you're likely to be involved in the more hazardous jobs, according to organizations monitoring the situation on the ground.

An NAACP investigation by staff who toured the Gulf of Mexico and interviewed residents and workers concluded that, "Community members and business owners [of color] have been locked out of access to contracts for cleanup and other opportunities related to addressing this disaster." In a letter from NAACP President Benjamin Jealous to BP CEO Tony Hayward, the civil rights organization noted that "contractors of color are not receiving equal consideration for opportunities to participate in mitigation efforts."

If information from the Federal Procurement Data System about oil spill contracts from the federal government is any indication, the NAACP is right. According to the latest data set, dated July 9 (though the agency warns its report lags "the work that has been awarded to date"), $2.2 million of $53 million in federal contracts -- 4.8 percent -- has gone to small, disadvantaged businesses. Women-owned businesses have landed 4.2 percent of contracts. Of 212 vendors with contracts, just two are African American, 18 are minority-owned, none are historically black colleges or universities -- despite the three in New Orleans alone: Xavier University, Dillard University and Southern University at New Orleans.

And while BP is supposed to take full financial responsibility for the oil spill, Congress is looking for ways to make victims of the Katrina floods pay for it. A bill passed by the House last week would grab $400 million from Louisiana's Road Home program -- created after Katrina for people to rebuild homes lost in the floods -- to use for BP's spill and the Afghanistan War. That bill is currently pending in the U.S. Senate. New Orleans residents weren't responsible for the 2005 disasters that took their homes -- the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers failed to build protective levees -- but now they'll be paying for another disaster not of their making.

But if minorities haven't been benefiting from the millions in contracts, they can't be happy either with the kind of jobs made available by BP. As The Root first reported back in May, African Americans are among the most affected by the spill. The bays around Plaquemines Parish -- where black fishers from the communities of Pointe a la Hache, Phoenix and Davent have trawled for shrimp and oysters for decades -- have been closing, putting an abrupt end to the livelihood of hundreds.

For those fishers who've been put out of work, BP has offered a limited number of jobs through its Vessels of Opportunity program to allow boat owners to help skim oil and deploy boom. These jobs have proven to include high levels of risk and hazard and have led to illnesses and injuries -- even suicide -- among already despondent workers. The exposure to fumes from the oil and dispersant mixtures has created cases in which workers have suffered nausea, headaches and other more serious health problems.

A report from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, which monitors worker safety during accidents, states that there have been 1,337 incidences affecting workers' health from April 22 to July 4. Of those, 522 were illnesses and 211 required medical treatment. The brief descriptions of the incidents on the list would lead one to believe that worker safety isn't being adequately enforced:

--On June 23: "Worker placed hand on exposed pipe, which had rough edges and cut worker's left hand; laceration on palm."

--On June 20: "Worker was found lying on ground next to chair; was unresponsive; regained consciousness 10 minutes later; dehydration."

--On June 18: "While pressure-washing the deck, water pierced worker's boot, causing a burn/puncture wound to left foot."

--On June 2: "Worker engaged a hydraulic rope winch and his fingers got caught between the rope and the spool. Left fifth finger last joint amputated except for small amount of skin."

Cases like these makes you wonder why the workers weren't supplied with thick enough gloves and boots to prevent these accidents, or why there isn't a supply of water on hand to prevent dehydration. On June 14, there were four cases of "fatigue, drowsiness, fainting; diagnosed as carbon monoxide poisoning" -- yet, in a call with environmental justice leaders, a representative from OSHA said they are not recommending respirators.

Just last week, OSHA assistant secretary David Michaels expressed concerns that the workers haven't been getting proper training: "Employees hired to be supervisors in the onshore and marine cleanup are required to receive extensive training. A rigorous program is required under OSHA's Hazardous Waste Operation and Emergency Response Standard." At issue is the fact that oil spill workers have been getting only four hours of training, as opposed to the 40-hour "HAZWOPER" training -- to which Michaels is referring -- required for this kind of work. Interestingly enough, the New Orleans-based Deep South Center for Environmental Justice has already been offering this training for years -- with a focus on young minorities who are normally excluded from the workforce. Along with the United Steelworkers, the Deep South Center has provided hazardous material training and jobs in times of disaster, as they did after Hurricane Katrina when they created the "A Safe Way Back Home" program.

During a recent meeting of the Deep South Center held at Dillard University, a black college in New Orleans, director Beverly Wright said, "We know from our history that four hours is not adequate for the best kind of training. They need to know about protective equipment and safety. Are they developing training exclusively for the fishermen? If we ever get supplemental funding, a lot of that should be targeted for the fishermen."

Wright comes from a long line of women who have advocated for environmental and worker safety: Pam Dashiell, Wilma Subra, Jane Addams, Florence Kelley and Alice Hamilton to name a few -- these are women who have been at the forefront, not in the margins.

But community organizations like Dr. Wright's have not benefited like white-owned private-sector companies from contracts from the oil spill. According to the Federal Procurement Data System, the businesses that have been most left out of contracts are minority-owned, women-owned and nonprofits. The Environmental Protection Agency has been one of the worst offenders in this arena, with only 1.7 percent of the dollars it's handed out -- $290,000 -- in

contracts going to small, disadvantaged businesses and zero dollars going to women-owned businesses.

This shows that what the NAACP and other organizations such as the Louisiana Justice Institute and the Equity and Inclusion Campaign have reported is correct. It also means that the burden of ensuring that minority fishers, local business owners and nonprofits are included has fallen on local foundations such as the Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation and the Gulf Coast Fund. These entities have provided their own worker safety equipment and trainings, and provided grants when BP and government contracts have been elusive. The same has occurred through the disasters of Hurricane Katrina, Rita, Gustav and Ike.

How many more disasters have to happen before the purse holders learn to finance and restore the local and most vulnerable ahead of everyone else?

Brentin Mock is a reporter for the New Orleans investigative-reporting news Web site The Lens.

HISPANIC MEDIA

Coasts of Mexico on the Gulf not yet report contamination (*Univision)*

07/13/2010 12:11 AM
12 of Julio of 2010, 08:18 p.m. ET
MEXICO, 12 Jul 2010 (AFP) - Te waters of the Gulf of Mexico as opposed to the Mexican coasts of Veracruz (this) and Tamaulipas (northeast) do not register until now is present at of crude originating of the sunk platform of the BP Briton, assured east Monday the ministry environment.

An inspection made by investigators the Independent National University of Mexico (UNAM) and the Mexican Institute of Ecology that crossed in a boat during one week the coasts of Tamaulipas and Veracruz, “concluded without until the moment has been hydrocarbon presence” said in an official notice that dependency.

During the inspection the experts took samples from water as well as sediments animals and vegetables that were put under laboratory examinations.

The petroleum spilled by the collapse in April of the platform Deepwater Horizon de Bristish Petroleum, that has caused the worse ecological disaster in the history of the United States, already reached beaches of the states of Texas, Luisiana, the Mississippi, Alabama and Florida in the United States, ruining good part of the local fishing economy.

From June beginnings the Mexican authorities maintain in monitoring the coasts on the Gulf of Mexico, that are crossed by airplanes and boats of Navy military.

Also an agreement with the private Camera of the Fishing Industry settled down, so that medium hundreds of boats of and small fishermen participate in the monitoring of possible effects on the

fauna.

According to experts, in most of the year the current of Yucatan crosses the Gulf of Mexico of the south to north, reason why it is little probable that the spot of crude arrives at Mexican waters if the spill is controlled before October.

NATIVE AMERICAN

EPA gives approval of Kennecott discharge pipes (*Indian Country Today*)

Originally printed at http://www.indiancountrytoday.com/national/EPA-gives-approval-of-Kennecott-discharge-pipes--98443004.html

BIG BAY, Mich. – Kennecott Eagle Minerals received a favorable ruling from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that means the mine's redesigned plan for its wastewater discharge pipes does not require an EPA permit, although an agency official warned that it expects the company to continue dialogue with opposition groups to consider making positive environmental changes to the entire project.

At issue are the mine's wastewater pipes that originally were to be covered by soil, but a new design essentially covers the pipes in a container rather than earth. The pipes remain at the same level as originally proposed.

Mine opponents said the new plan was a way to skirt the federal Safe Drinking Water Act and allowed the mine to start its site preparation work this past April – earlier than expected – because Kennecott had all the grants required for the mine thus its leasing of the land from the state of Michigan.

The ruling means the EPA agrees that the nickel and copper mine doesn't need a permit for Underground Injection Control to comply with the federal SDWA for its Treated Wastewater Infiltration System.

"We have reviewed the revised plans for the construction of the TWIS and agree that a permit is not required the federal UIC programs for the infiltration system as currently designed," said, EPA Assistant Administrator for Water Peter S. Silva in a July 1 letter to Jon Cherry, manager of Environmental and Governmental Affairs for Kennecott.

"Based upon our review of the modified TWIS design, the lateral perforated piping that constitutes the fluid distribution system is above ground and thus is not a subsurface system," Silva wrote.

Environment groups, the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community and other tribes have been trying to stop the mine for six years because they consider the entire area sacred as its ceded land covered by federal treaties.

Silva added a warning in his letter that the EPA will be keeping a close eye on the mine.

The EPA "retains authority under the SDWA, as well as other laws, to take necessary action to address possible contamination from the TWIS that may endanger underground sources of drinking water regardless of the design or the unit or its permit status," Silva wrote. "We understand that discharges from the TWIS are subject to a state permit that includes monitoring and response requirements." The EPA "will continue to coordinate with the state to determine whether any federal response action with respect to TWIS is necessary."

Silva told mine officials to notify the EPA if there are "further changes" to TWIS because if there are additional modifications, the EPA "will have to reconsider whether federal UIC requirements apply."

The National Wildlife Federation, KBIC and several groups still have lawsuits pending against the mine that are being heard in circuit court.

Silva noted that the mine has "significant community and tribal interests involved" and encouraged Kennecott to continue "dialogue" with KBIC – "in an attempt to resolve some of the issues associated with the proposed mine.

"It is the EPA's expectation that Kennecott will follow through on efforts to consider all viewpoints, and consider any appropriate environmentally beneficial changes to the project."

The mine, being constructed on the Yellow Dog Plains near Lake Superior, is targeting a huge mineral-rich ore body underneath the Salmon Trout River, the only known place that species of trout reproduce naturally in North America. Based on one expert's review of the plan, mine opponents fear the river could collapse into the mine thus triggering a large amount of sulfuric acid that could flow into Lake Superior. The mine experts disagree and say the entire project is safe. Sulfuric acid is a byproduct of sulfide mining caused when oxygen and water mix with the ore.

Ojibwa tribes are saddened because the company has bulldozed a portion of the Yellow Dog Plains including around most of sacred Eagle Rock, with plans to blast through an underground portion of the sacred site for the port and tunnel of the underground mine.

Meanwhile, the Marquette area Christian and Buddhist community are organizing a day of fasting and prayer from sunrise to sunset on Lake Superior Day, July 18, said Rev. Jon Magnuson, a Lutheran pastor in Marquette, Mich.

The interfaith event is being held by the invitation of those who live on the Yellow Dog Watershed and will be held as close to sacred Eagle Rock as possible, as the site is under the control of the mine owner.

Every three hours religious leaders will hold services and liturgies to pray for Lake Superior, Magnuson said.

7/13/2010 12:27:00 PM

Viewpoint: Justice delayed is justice denied (*Navajo-Hopi Observer*)

Vernon Masayesva
Kykotsmovi, Ariz.
The words "Justice delayed is justice denied" are nowhere as true as they are on Black Mesa, homeland of the Navajo and Hopi people in northern Arizona.

In 1970, Peabody Western Coal Company, a subsidiary of Peabody Energy, opened the world's largest strip mine on Black Mesa. The purposes of coal mining on Black Mesa were first, to produce low-cost electricity to transport water from the Colorado River to Phoenix and Tucson via the Central Arizona Project; and second, to supply a huge demand for electricity in the booming cities in the Southwest. Black Mesa became a sacrificial area for energy production.

The Hopi Tribal Council misunderstood the magnitude of the devastation the mining would wreak when in 1966, they approved the coal lease under pressure from energy companies, Arizona politicians, John Boyden (a lawyer for the Hopi Tribe, who was billing Peabody for expenses during coal negotiations) and Stewart Udall, former Interior Secretary.

Members of the tribal council did not know that in just 35 years, over 45 billion gallons of fossil water from a desert would be used to operate the world's only coal slurry operations, using enough water to supply 8,000 tribal members with drinking water for over 300 years. The Secretary of the Interior, serving as a trustee of the tribe's natural resources, approved the initial price of $1.67 per acre-foot (equivalent to 325,000 gallons). Pumping of the N-Aquifer is continuing, albeit on a much smaller scale.

Little did the Hopi elders know that by 1985, 168 impoundment ponds would be constructed to trap rainwater that used to flow into Moenkopi and Dinnebito Washes. The impoundment ponds were constructed to prevent sediments from going into the rivers of the U.S., in compliance with the Clean Water Act. The impoundments were designed to capture 728 billion gallons of water from a 70 square mile drainage area. The sediment and fresh water dams have a cumulative capacity of close to 1 billion gallons. According to Peabody's website, the impounded waters are virtually never dewatered as required by the U.S. Surface Mining Reclamation Act.

The Environmental Protection Agency recently produced information that toxic waters are seeping out of some of the sediment ponds and into surface and ground water. The remainder of the water - approximately 365 million gallons - evaporates each year.

The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) relies on Peabody's theoretical groundwater model to assure the Hopi people and the public that no "significant material damage" is happening to the N-Aquifer, and that the water are protected in accordance with mining regulations. This position has been refuted by experts hired by the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Based on what they call "irrefutable" technical data, OSMRE has declined to require Peabody to pose a surface and groundwater reclamation plan and insurance. This is in direct violation of the U.S. Surface Mining and Reclamation Act, which is intended to keep the hydrologic system in balance.

Just as mining has caused irreparable damage to surface water and waters that lie deep below the surface, so mining has erased the footprints of Hopi ancestors who settled on Black Mesa while awaiting entry into Oraivi Village.

In a 20-year survey, starting in 1968, 1,026 historic sites and 1,596 prehistoric sites were recorded, according to Peabody's website. Only 168 of these were excavated. The study also located 178 burial sites. What happened to the remains of Hopi ancestors and the rest of the archaeological sites have yet to be fully revealed.

The Hopi-Tewa grassroots people wrote to President Obama four months ago, informing him of the damages occurring on Black Mesa. Obama has yet to respond.

Today, after close to 40 years of strip-mining, the Hopi and neighboring Navajo people still have no idea of the magnitude of damages done to Black Mesa, their sacred homeland. Only a Congressional oversight hearing will flush out the truth.

Perhaps in light of the oil spill in the Gulf, the too-close relationship between the Minerals Management Service and oil companies that led to the resignation of the head of MMS last month and the his promise to hold mining and oil companies accountable, President Obama will order an investigation into the Peabody Coal Spill.

6/29/2010 12:38:00 PM

Old underground tanks being removed in Winslow (*Navajo-Hopi Observer*)

Todd Roth/NHO
Todd Roth
NHO
WINSLOW, Ariz. - In 2004, the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) started the "Route 66 Initiative" to help with assessments and cleanup of underground storage tanks (USTs) which are typically located at obsolete gas station sites. The initiative has successfully sped up the identification and removal of underground storage tanks and associated water and soil contamination.

Since 2005 the Route 66 effort has developed into an interagency effort called the Route 66 Partnership. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is also involved and provides grant money from a 2002 Brownfields Law that assists in cleaning up petroleum-contaminated sites.

Winslow is participating in this cleanup effort by removing leaking USTs and contaminated soil at identified sites. After the contaminated soil is removed, clean fill is placed, compacted and graded. Last year tanks and soil were removed from a site on the west end of Winslow on Old Route 66, called the Ice house, which was at one time a gas station. The tanks, contaminated soil and entire structure were removed.

In June 2010, USTs and soil were removed from the east end of Winslow Route 66 at the former Minnetonka Trading Post.

The city of Winslow is doing its part to provide not only a pleasant community environment, but a clean one as well.