

# PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

## Marcellus waste recycled mostly in-house

By Andrew Conte  
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The largest explorers of Marcellus shale gas said on Friday in response to federal regulators that they have started recycling most of their wastewater and no longer send it to treatment plants.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency this week asked the six largest Marcellus exploration companies to explain how and where they dispose of the chemical-laced, salty water that flows back to the surface from drilling operations. The companies have until May 25 to respond.

"We will certainly provide the information," said Jim Gipson, spokesman for Chesapeake Energy Corp. "However, we are currently recycling and reusing the vast majority of our produced water in Pennsylvania and have been for quite some time. We do not utilize wastewater treatment facilities."

Water that cannot be reused, he said, gets sent out of state to underground injection wells.

Pennsylvania has three such active wells: two in Clearfield County and one in Erie County, according to state regulators.

Besides Chesapeake, EPA requested the disposal information from Atlas Resources; Talisman Energy USA; Range Resources — Appalachia; Cabot Oil and Gas Corp.; and Shell. Together, those companies do more than half of the Marcellus shale gas drilling in Pennsylvania.

A spokesman for Talisman said the company recycles 100 percent of its wastewater. Range Resources recycles about 90 percent of its flowback and has the rest either fully treated at facilities that clean it to distilled water standards or pumped into disposal wells, a spokesman said.

Shell said in a statement that its "waste management techniques aim to reduce volume and minimize environmental impacts through maximized reuse of residual water."

Officials at the two other companies did not respond to the Trib's request for information.

"We want to make sure that the drillers are handling their wastewater in an environmentally responsible manner," said Shawn M. Garvin, EPA's mid-Atlantic regional administrator.

Federal officials took aim at the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental

Protection, which has primary responsibility for regulating drilling impacts. The state agency imposed a Thursday deadline for drillers to voluntarily stop sending flowback to wastewater treatment plants that are not designed to remove the chemicals and salts.

The EPA wants the state to provide closer oversight of how Marcellus shale wastewater might be affecting drinking water. The agency wants notice from Pennsylvania whenever a treatment plant accepts flowback water, and it called on the state to apply drinking water standards near discharges and to "consider more 'representative' " sampling of drinking water facilities downstream from facilities that treat flowback.

"As the frontline regulatory agency of the natural-gas industry in Pennsylvania, we work with EPA and will continue to do so," said Katy Gresh, DEP spokeswoman.

The shale industry is "aggressively and tightly regulated" by state officials, the Marcellus Shale Coalition, a trade group that includes the six drillers, said in a statement. "EPA overstepping its regulatory authority and duplicating efforts underway at the state level" does not make common sense, it said.

"The state is aggressively taking action to protect our environment," said Matt Pitzarella, a Range Resources spokesman.

"The DEP for us in Pennsylvania has much greater capability to provide the level of oversight to protect the public and ensure the industry is following the law," said Dave Spigelmeyer, vice president of government relations for Chesapeake.

*Andrew Conte can be reached at [andrewconte@tribweb.com](mailto:andrewconte@tribweb.com) or 412-320-7835.*

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