

March 2, 2011

The Honorable John L. Mica
Chairman
Transportation & Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nick J. Rahall
Ranking Member
Transportation & Infrastructure
2163 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Mica and Ranking Member Rahall:

We write to draw your attention to an article published in the New York Times, "*Regulation Lax as Gas Wells' Tainted Water Hits Rivers*" (Saturday 2/26/2011). The article describes environmental and health concerns resulting from hydraulic fracturing to produce natural gas. The process, also known as hydrofracking, has the potential to contaminate widely used sources of drinking water and could cause serious health problems for those exposed to the wastewater created during the process. This is a public health concern for the workers at the water treatment facilities, for residents living in an area of a natural gas well, and for those serviced by drinking water that is potentially contaminated by the hydrofracking process and its wastewater. The NYT suggests that federal and state regulations have not kept pace with the growing hydrofracking industry and that the current system of sending wastewater to water treatment plants is not suitable for removing radioactive and other hazardous materials.

In order to assess these concerns, we request that the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee hold hearings on the environmental and health impact of hydraulic fracturing. Internal documents from the Environmental Protection Agency, state regulators, and drillers that were obtained by the NYT suggest the wastewater from hydrofracking contains radioactivity at levels higher than previously thought and that many of the public sewage treatment plants that now handle wastewater are not capable of removing radioactive contaminants. Additional reports have documented the presence of diesel fuel and other known toxic chemicals in hydraulic fracturing fluid. We are particularly concerned because some of the wastewater is being transported to New York State. Public hearings would shed light on this critical issue and help ensure proper oversight throughout the hydrofracking and wastewater removal process.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress

MAURICE D. HINCHEY
Member of Congress

JERROLD L. NADLER
Member of Congress