

Testimony of Natalie Mebane, Associate Washington Representative for the Beyond Dirty Fuels Campaign and the Public Lands Protection Program

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Science Advisory Board
Hydraulic Fracturing Research Advisory Panel Public Teleconference
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Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to offer comment today. My name is Natalie Mebane, and I am the associate Washington Representative for the national Sierra Club's Beyond Dirty Fuels Campaign, working to end our country's reliance on oil and gas, to protect communities from the harms these fuels impose, and to combat catastrophic climate change.

On behalf of the Sierra Club's 2.4 million members and supporters around the country, I'd like to again thank the Science Advisory Board for conducting this thorough review of the EPA's Assessment of the Potential Impacts of Hydraulic Fracturing for Oil and Gas on Drinking Water Resources. With millions of Americans around the country now living amongst oil and gas infrastructure, it is critical that we get this assessment right and that we work quickly to correct the harms that this industry has inflicted on these communities. Thousands of community members are watching this process - community members who are painfully familiar with the very real impacts that the oil and gas industry has had on their families. People whose water has been entirely shut off due to dangerous methane contamination, requiring construction of **off gassing stacks** next to their homes; people forced to fill jugs of water at their local super markets because the companies have refused to fill their water buffalos; people paying to truck in water themselves because the water coming out of their taps gives their children nosebleeds, rashes, and headaches.

So we are very glad to see your draft recommendations to the EPA on how they can improve the study. As you recognize, many members of the general public may only read the Executive Summary, and many have done so, to great alarm, as the apparent findings represented in that Executive Summary do not comport with the reality they are living with on the ground. In particular, I would like to thank you for the following section:

*The SAB has concerns regarding the clarity and adequacy of support for several major findings presented within the draft Assessment Report that seek to draw national-level conclusions ... The SAB is concerned that these major findings do not clearly, concisely, and accurately describe the findings developed in the chapters of the draft Assessment Report, and that the EPA has not adequately supported these major findings with data or analysis from within the body of the draft Assessment Report. The SAB is concerned that these major findings are presented ambiguously within the Executive Summary and appear inconsistent with the observations, data, and levels of uncertainty presented and discussed in the body of the draft Assessment Report. Most SAB Panel members expressed particular concern regarding the draft Assessment Report's high-level conclusion statement that **"We did not find evidence that these mechanisms have led to widespread, systemic impacts on drinking water resources in the United States."***

Given these concerns, we hope that you will clearly recommend that this sentence citing no “widespread, systemic impacts” be removed or dramatically changed in the Executive summary, as, per your report, it does not accurately describe the EPA’s own findings, and has *absolutely* been interpreted by the public as the primary finding of the study. To see from your report that this is an inaccurate reflection of the EPA’s own study is infuriating, and this must be rectified.

We also appreciate your additional suggestions for improving the Executive Summary to make it more amenable to a broad audience. Specifically:

- We appreciate the recognition of the severity of local-level fracking impacts;
- The assertion that the EPA should be cautious about their use of generalizations and clearly qualify them if they are employed;
- And that the EPA should either include before and after studies, or at the very least explain why they aren’t included or reference such studies conducted by other bodies.

I have personally seen the orange water that comes out of the spigot for homeowners that have had their drinking water contaminated by oil and gas drilling. I have seen their off gassing stacks that continuously vent methane outside of someone’s home, because their tap water is filled with it. I have spoken to the children that were sick for months at a time experiencing extreme stomach pains, nosebleeds and vomiting. It is not enough for EPA to say that these impacts are not widespread when these families no longer have safe water to use. It is important that the EPA study clearly recognizes the impacts on drinking water that have taken place as a result of fracking and that arbitrary summary statements referencing those impacts not being “widespread or systemic” be removed.

Again, thank you for conducting this important review, and we look forward to your final review.