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SAB Follow-up testimony
October 29, 2015

An incredible amount of work went into this report and it will no doubt remain a useful resource for many years. Everyone here should be commended for taking time out of your lives to try and develop a high quality Assessment.

But the effectiveness of the panel in improving the final document will be overshadowed if the top line messages that survive at the end of this process can mislead the public either by journalist working on a deadline or can be deliberately misconstrued by stakeholders attempting to obfuscate or downplay the vulnerabilities described in the body of the report.

Right now we have policymakers and politicians taking one or two sentences from the executive summary or press release and using it to negate the very real concerns about oil and gas development that we heard about yesterday morning and that are described in detailed in the subsequent chapters.

If this expert panel has major concerns with top line conclusions of “widespread, systemic “and that “the number of impacts were small relative to the amount of hydraulically fractured wells,” imagine the general public trying to discern exactly what EPA is saying and what they should and should not be worrying about.

Simply put the statement as written cannot stand, because it is indeed a more nuanced situation than the sentence allows.

It leads to a news cycle with headlines like:
“EPA Fracking Study: Drilling Wins” – Forbes

“Fracking Doesn’t Pollute Drinking Water, EPA says” – Newsweek

“EPA: Fracking doesn’t harm drinking water” – Washington Times

The final Executive Summary must be revised to reflect the inherent uncertainty in EPA’s ability to come to any firm conclusions on how “widespread or systemic” the impacts on drinking water really are without further analysis, access to more data and defining what widespread and systemic actually means.