Subject: : Conservation
Topic: : Fracking Spill into Pine Creek?
Re: Fracking Spill into Pine Creek?
Author: : midnightangler
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URL:

Hydrocarbon reservoirs are never going to be uniform in composition. There are always going to contain a mix of organic chemicals and that mix is going to be different from one well to the next. It's inevitable that that chemicals like benzene tend to be present in natural gas wells for this reason. Those chemicals are already in the ground, and they happen to be in high concentrations in the same places you'll find natural gas, coal, or petroleum.

The point is, wells don't contain pure methane. They contain a mix of organic chemicals and some of those chemicals DO cause cancer. If you pump fracking water into a system like this and bring it back to the surface it will contain some fraction of those chemicals. Volatile components can be released at the well site, or even at adjacent sites if they are mobilized by the fracking procedure. Nobody really knows where they might be released or what the concentrations will be.

It's perfectly reasonable to worry about gas wells impacting wild trout. However, the truth is that they probably effect people to a greater extent than fish. This class of chemicals doesn't tend to be very soluble in water. When they are present in water, the concentrations will be very low. When they are released into the air, the concentration can be much higher. If you happen to say, work at a well or live near one, this can present a problem. The rate of leukemia is significantly higher for people who work at gas/petroleum wells or in refineries. These chemicals do effect people. That has been known for a long time.

The amount of benzene released varies from one well to another and changes over time. If you take 100 wells, a few of them will have very high benzene levels in the air nearby (ie. make you feel dizzy). Another 20% will have moderately high levels. Most of them will be much lower.

It is possible to monitor the benzene concentration so that this issue can be mitigated when very high concentrations are detected. Pennsylvania currently does a terrible job of monitoring these wells.

In my view, the responsibility for this falls back on the people. Pennsylvanians had a choice and they elected Corbett. People like to blame the government for failing them, but the truth is that the people are failing themselves. You can't expect the government to be accountable if the people refuse to accept accountability for their choices at the voting booth.