Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

January 18, 2013

Administrator Lisa Jackson
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator Jackson:

We write out of great concern about the growing body of evidence of the harmful impacts of oil and gas drilling operations, including hydraulic fracturing, and to express frustration over the slow pace of an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) investigation into the impacts of those activities on groundwater quality in Pavillion, Wyoming.

There are reports of drinking well contamination near hydraulic fracturing operations in more than ten states nationwide. As the oil and natural gas boom grows, so has water contamination near drilling sites, and we do not believe that relationship is coincidental.

In 2008, citizens of Pavillion – worried about the impacts of gas drilling operations on their water quality – filed a public petition asking the EPA to investigate local groundwater contamination. After completing a preliminary study, the EPA released a draft report in December, 2011. Your agency extended the public comment period from January, 2012 to October 2012, and then to January 15th of this year. On January 11, your agency announced the third delay in action on your investigation into contaminated drinking water in Pavillion, pushing a conclusion until September. The people of Pavillion – whose water is riddled with unsafe chemicals – deserve faster action.

The Pavillion case is also a touchstone in the investigation over the impacts of hydraulic fracturing on water quality, which will have an impact on hydraulic fracturing and water policy in the future. Hydraulic fracturing operations are conducted every day in this country, potentially putting water sources at risk. The American public deserves to know as soon as possible if those operations are harmful.

Your agency has a proud record of protecting public health and the environment. We are very disappointed in this delay, which we believe must be the last. As we await your findings, we ask that your agency continue to work collaboratively with state, tribal, and local agencies, as well as impacted residents, to protect public health and the environment.

Sincerely,

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

John Conyers
Member of Congress

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