

ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS

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This latest **EXCALIBUR** bulletin presents several emerging developments and in-progress initiatives potentially significant to environmental projects regionally and nationally.



Final USEPA Risk Assessment for Trichloroethylene (TCE). In late June, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) issued its final health risk assessment for TCE. Health risks were identified for consumers using spray aerosol degreasers and spray fixatives containing TCE, and for workers using TCE as a degreaser in small commercial shops or as a stain remover in a dry cleaning establishment. These new risk assessment findings for TCE have already prompted some states (e.g., California) and USEPA regions to lower screening level values for TCE.

http://epa.gov/oppt/existingchemicals/pubs/TCE_OPPTWorkplanChemRA_FINAL_062414.pdf

Emerging Chemicals of Concern in Landfill Leachate. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) recently completed the first nationwide study as to the presence of chemicals of emerging concern (CECs) in landfill leachate. Leachate was collected from 19 active landfills and analyzed for 202 chemicals across of wide range of uses, including pharmaceuticals, personal hygiene products, pesticides, plastics, and other commonly used household products. Concentrations for the CECs detected in the landfill leachate varied significantly. The study is part of a longer-term effort to assess the fate and transport of CECs and may result in identifying CECs with sufficient environmental and/or human health risk to warrant regulatory attention.

http://www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=3968#.U_Jgv2OK7iV

USEPA Provides \$11 Million to Clean Up and Redevelop Contaminated Brownfield Sites Across the U.S. The USEPA is releasing \$11 million in supplemental funding to clean up contaminated brownfield sites across the U.S. Grants from the Revolving Loan Funds will help carry out projects for grantees who have already made progress in their work to clean up and redevelop brownfield sites in their communities.

<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/d0cf6618525a9efb85257359003fb69d/6c5c53cd1011965085257d34005e2511!OpenDocument>

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Study Finds Defective Wells, Not Hydraulic Fracturing, is Principal Cause of Contaminated Water Supply Wells.

A study by researchers from Duke University, Ohio State University, Stanford University, Dartmouth College, and the University of Rochester looked at the methane gas content of more than 130 drinking water supply wells in Pennsylvania and Texas. Eight clusters of wells (seven in PA and one in TX) were found impacted with contamination, including increased levels of methane gas from the Marcellus Shale in PA, the Barnett Shale in TX, and from shallower geologic strata in both states. Using noble gas and hydrocarbon tracers, the researchers determined the contamination was related to construction problems with the gas extraction wells, including poor well casings and insufficient sealing of the annulus space surrounding the casing, but not as a result of methane migrating into the drinking water aquifers as a result of the horizontal drilling and fracking to extract the natural gas resident in the shale rock. This study made comprehensive use of “stray gas forensics” whereby the chemical signature of the methane was examined to determine its source. The forensic analysis indicated the methane in the impacted water supply wells was neither naturally occurring nor the result of hydraulic fracturing.

<http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2014/09/12/1322107111.abstract>

Proposed Revisions to the Clean Water Act Section 404 Definition of “Waters of the United States.”

On 4/21/14, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers issued a proposed rule to define the term “waters of the United States.” If adopted, the proposed definition would set some limits for federal jurisdiction over surface waters anywhere in the U.S., which can impinge upon any entity that already owns or uses land (or that may acquire land) that contains or is situated near virtually any current, historical, or prospective surface water feature. The rule seeks to establish a definition that is consistent with several less-than-clear standards suggested in several U.S. Supreme Court decisions. The proposed definition would add to the waters historically subject to federal regulation by rule: all the tributaries of traditional navigable waters, interstate waters, territorial seas, and impoundments of such tributaries; wetlands adjacent to the aforementioned tributaries; and waters other than wetlands that are adjacent to the jurisdictional waters. The rule would also add a category of waters that would be considered jurisdictional, but on a case-by-case basis. This category is “other waters, including wetlands, provided that those waters alone, or in combination with other similarly situated waters, including wetlands, located in the same region, have a significant nexus to” the categories of jurisdictional waters. A “significant nexus” would exist when “a water, including wetlands, either alone or in combination with other similarly situated waters in the region...significantly affects the chemical, physical, or biological integrity of” the waters included in the categories of jurisdictional waters. It is expected that the new rule, if adopted, will subject many more areas to federal jurisdiction under the Army Corps of Engineers’ wetland permitting program, including storm water ditches that may contain water only a few times each year.

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-04-21/pdf/2014-07142.pdf>

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