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STRONGER Completes Independent Review of Arkansas Oil and Gas Commission Program Regulating Hydraulic Fracturing of Oil & Gas Wells

LITTLE ROCK, Ark.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--A targeted review of the Arkansas Oil and Gas Commission (AOGC), Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), and Arkansas Natural Resources Commission (ANRC) programs regulating the hydraulic fracturing of oil and gas wells has been completed by a multi-stakeholder review team appointed by State Review of Oil and Natural Gas Environmental Regulations, Inc. (STRONGER).

During the period November 2011 through January 2012 a seven-person review team appointed by STRONGER conducted a review to evaluate the hydraulic fracturing programs compared to the 2010 Hydraulic Fracturing Guidelines. The review team consisted of three members and four official observers. The team members were: Lori Wrotenbery, Oklahoma Corporation Commission; Wilma Subra, Subra Company, Louisiana; and Jim Collins, Independent Petroleum Association of America. The official observers were: Jamie Crawford, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality; Debbie Doss, Arkansas Canoe Club; Jim Bolander, Southwestern Energy; and Nancy Johnson, U.S. Department of Energy.

"The review team has concluded that the Arkansas hydraulic fracturing program is well managed and professional and generally meets STRONGER's hydraulic fracturing guidelines. The review team also made some specific recommendations for improvement based on the guidelines," said Lori Wrotenbery, Director of the Oil and Gas Conservation Division of the Oklahoma Corporation Commission, who served as chairman of the review team.

The Arkansas hydraulic fracturing regulatory program was singled out for updating its hydraulic fracturing rules, developing a water well complaint protocol that could serve as an example to other states, and its user friendly and educational web site.

The review team has also made recommendations for notification prior to hydraulic fracturing to enable field inspectors the opportunity to monitor hydraulic fracturing operations, increased funding to continue support of ADEQ positions that were funded for two years by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, and funding to increase AOGC staffing to a level sufficient to meet Commission inspection goals.

Copies of the report of the Arkansas Hydraulic Fracturing Review are available by contacting Ben Grunewald by email at bgrunewald@gwpc.org, by phone at (405) 516-4972, or by downloading from the STRONGER website at www.strongerinc.org.

About STRONGER:

The name STRONGER is an acronym for State Review of Oil and Natural Gas Environmental Regulations, Inc. STRONGER was formed in 1999 to reinvigorate and carry forward the state review process begun cooperatively in 1988 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission (IOGCC).

The mission of STRONGER is to educate and provide services for the continuous improvement of regulatory programs and industry practices in order to enhance human health and the environment. STRONGER is a non-profit, multi-stakeholder organization which shares innovative techniques and environmental protection strategies and identifies opportunities for program improvement. The state review process is a non-regulatory program and relies on states to volunteer for reviews.

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Notes to Editors: There have been approximately 35,000 oil and gas wells drilled in Arkansas. The first oil well was drilled in 1919 in Ouachita County. Currently there are approximately 7,000 producing oil wells in the southern portion of the state operated by approximately 200 operators. There are currently around 4,000 gas wells under the control of about 100 operators producing gas from the Arkoma Basin in the northwestern portion of Arkansas.

Since 2004, the majority of the development in Arkansas has been occurring in the Fayetteville Shale located in north-central Arkansas, where three primary operators are producing almost all of the approximately 4,000 gas wells. Because of the development of the Fayetteville Shale, gas production has quadrupled since 2004, with production approaching one trillion cubic feet per year. The Fayetteville Shale is being developed at a rate of about 700 to 900 wells per year.

Contacts

STRONGER
Ben Grunewald, 405-516-4972
bgrunewald@gwpc.org

