

Oil and Gas Extraction/Wastewater Management Practices: U.S. EPA Report Summarizing Stakeholder Input



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The United States Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA") issued a May 2020 report titled:

Summary of Input on Oil and Gas Extraction Wastewater Management Practices Under the Clean Water Act ("Report")

See EPA-821-S19-001.

The *Report* was prepared by the Engineering and Analysis Division of EPA's Office of Water.

The *Report* is described as a summary of stakeholder engagement states, tribes and stakeholders that regulate and manage wastewater from the oil and gas industry. The scope included wastewater from both conventional and unconventional oil and gas extraction at onshore facilities.

Extraction of oil and gas produces water along with fossil fuels. The amount of wastewater produced can vary dependent upon the location, producing formation and age of the well.

The *Report* notes that large volumes of wastewater are generated by the oil and gas industry. Further, it is projected that the volumes will increase.

Management of the wastewater is typically through disposal by use of underground injection. Use of this technique means the water can no longer be accessed or utilized.

The use of injection is stated to be limited in some areas. As a result, there is interest in "new approaches." In addition, EPA states:

... some states and stakeholders are asking whether it makes sense to continue to waste this water, particularly in water scarce areas of the country, and what steps would be necessary to treat and renew it for other purposes.

Issues considered by the *Report* included:

- How existing federal approaches to produced water management under the Clean Water Act can interact more effectively with state and tribal regulations, requirements or policy needs
- Whether federal regulations may allow for broader discharges of treated produced water to surface waters

EPA had previously released a draft May 2019 report describing input it had received when it solicited public input.

Contents of the 2020 Report include:

- Background
- Produced Water Characteristics
- Management of Produced Waters
- The EPA's Clean Water Act Regulations for Produced Water
- Technology-Based Effluent Limitations
- Water Quality-Based Effluent Limitations
- The EPA's Outreach to Stakeholders
- Major Themes from State Agencies
- Major Themes from Tribes
- Major Themes from Oil and Gas Industry Members
- Major Themes from members of NGOs
- Major Themes from Members of Academia
- Major Themes from Other Entities
- Summary and Next Steps

A copy of the 2020 Report can be downloaded [here](#).