



One of the energy issues to watch in 2014 involves transporting fracking waste water by barge. A recent AP story (picked up by the local Wheeling paper) touched on the environmental aspects.

*"The Marcellus Shale formation, underlying large parts of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio and some neighboring states, is the nation's most productive natural gas field. Thousands of new wells have been drilled there since 2008, and hundreds of millions of gallons of wastewater needs to be disposed of each year. Some states, such as Texas and Ohio, have many underground waste disposal wells. But Pennsylvania has only a few, meaning the leftovers have to be shipped elsewhere. The Coast Guard proposal says barge companies want to move waste from the Marcellus region 'via inland waterways to storage or reprocessing centers and final disposal sites in Ohio, Texas, and Louisiana.' That means large quantities of waste could be shipped on major rivers such as the Ohio; one of its main tributaries, the Monongahela; and the Mississippi."*

The proposed Rule allows river barges to carry fracking wastewater to disposal sites. The argument for the use of barges is that one barge can carry the same amount of waste as 100 trucks. The local Wheeling paper picked up an AP story citing a government report that "according to a 2011 report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office, the fatality, injury and air pollution rates for barge transportation are far lower than truck or rail transport."

This barge issue has the potential to split the environmental community. Many environmentalists fear the impact of the chemicals involved in fracking and do not want to see them moved up and down US rivers. Yet, as noted above, barges can cut down on overall pollution.

The issue is not going away. The Marcellus and neighboring Utica formations continue to expand and exceed projections.



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