When oil and water mix

July 3 2018

Hydraulic fracturing of organic-rich shales has become a major industry. The commonly used term for this extraction of hydrocarbons—fracking—is especially intriguing. Not only does it convey the process of breaking apart rocks, but the dividing of public opinion. Fracking is simultaneously hyped as a boon to the economy and a disaster to the environment.

The geoscience community lies at ground zero for discussions of fracking. This broad and diverse group of people on the one hand understands commonalities in basic earth science, but on the other hand includes the fascinating juxtaposition of individuals propelling development and extraction, and individuals monitoring and constraining deleterious impacts. As a consequence, an acknowledged problem amongst many in the geosciences has been the lack of balanced discussions on the merits and demerits of fracking.

In their new paper for *GSA Today*, Daniel J. Soeder and Douglas B. Kent bridge chasms in discussions of fracking by providing a current paper summarizing environmental impacts of shale development. Crucially, the article is open access, adheres to science and policy, and presents a complex problem such that even non-geoscientists can appreciate the issues. The paper provides an excellent understanding and a proper platform of how various potential impacts of fracking are being addressed.

More information: Daniel J. Soeder et al. When oil and water mix: Understanding the environmental impacts of shale development, *GSA*

Today (2018). DOI: 10.1130/GSATG361A.1

Provided by Geological Society of America

Citation: When oil and water mix (2018, July 3) retrieved 20 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2018-07-oil.html

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