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Volume 14, 2012 - [Issue 4](#)

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# Environmental Reviews and Case Studies: Addressing the Societal Costs of Unconventional Oil and Gas Exploration and Production: A Framework for Evaluating Short-Term, Future, and Cumulative Risks and Uncertainties of Hydrofracking

Simona L. Perry

Pages 352-365 | Received 15 May 2012, Accepted 20 Aug 2012, Published online: 03 Jan 2017

Cite this article <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1466046612000336>

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## Abstract

This article proposes a framework for addressing societal costs—psychological, social, community, and human health risks and uncertainties—associated with natural gas extraction and production from tight shale, tight sand, or coal-bed methane formations that use hydraulic fracturing processes. The US Environmental Protection Agency's 2011-14 study of hydraulic fracturing and the risks posed to drinking-water resources is used as a case study of how such a framework could be applied. This report also discusses some of the current regulatory and institutional barriers that make

incorporation of societal costs into science-based and proactive decisions regarding unconventional oil and gas exploration and production in the United States more difficult and recommends some general steps for getting past those barriers.

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## Acknowledgments

I thank several anonymous contributors from federal agencies who provided insight and thoughtful correspondence on the framework proposed and overall direction of this article. All analysis and critique of current risk assessments being planned or carried out by federal agencies are mine alone. Many thanks also to the three anonymous peer reviewers whose thoughtful, detailed comments greatly improved the original draft.

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