



As the country awaits results from a nationwide safety study on the natural gas drilling process of fracking, a separate government investigation into contamination in a place where residents have long complained that drilling fouled their water has turned up alarming levels of underground pollution.

A pair of environmental monitoring wells drilled deep into an aquifer in Pavillion, Wyo., contain high levels of cancer-causing compounds and at least one chemical commonly used in hydraulic fracturing, according to new water test results released yesterday by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The findings are consistent with water samples the EPA has collected from at least 42 homes in the area since 2008, when ProPublica began reporting on foul water and health concerns in Pavillion and the agency started investigating reports of contamination there.

Last year -- after warning residents not to drink or cook with the water and to ventilate their homes when they showered -- the EPA drilled the monitoring wells to get a more precise picture of the extent of the contamination.

The Pavillion area has been drilled extensively for natural gas over the last two decades and is home to hundreds of gas wells. Residents have alleged for nearly a decade that the drilling -- and hydraulic fracturing in particular -- has caused their water to turn black and smell like gasoline. Some residents say they suffer neurological impairment, loss of smell, and nerve pain they associate with exposure to pollutants.

[More...](#)