Gas Well / Water Well Subsurface Contamination*

Rick Railsback¹

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Abstract

With the advent of horizontal drilling and frac technologies which allow the commercial production of oil and gas from very low permeability rocks, onshore North America is undergoing a historic drilling boom. The industry is now drilling in areas never drilled before – densely populated and often with significant, beneficial-use aquifers in the shallow subsurface. Is oil and gas drilling, fracing, and production endangering the nation's groundwater supplies? Are water wells and aquifers being contaminated with oil and gas, drilling mud, and/or frac fluids? Numerous tools and methods of investigation can be used to answer these questions:

- proximity;
- timing of the impact;
- other contaminant sources;
- oil and gas well records;
- pressure data from the gas well and water well;
- data on frac geometry;
- natural gas, condensate, and water composition;
- seismic data;
- cement bond logs;
- noise logs;
- temperature logs;
- gamma ray logs;
- radioactive tracers;
- pressure interference tests; and
- installation of monitoring wells.

^{*}Adapted from an oral presentation given at AAPG Mid-Continent Section Meeting, Wichita, Kansas, October 12-15, 2013

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Effective use of these tools will solve the problem of whether or not an oil or gas well has contaminated a water well. Operators can utilize these tools to educate the public and landowners, to promote and defend drilling programs, and in litigation support.	

GAS WELL/WATER WELL SUBSURFACE CONTAMINATION

Rick Railsback

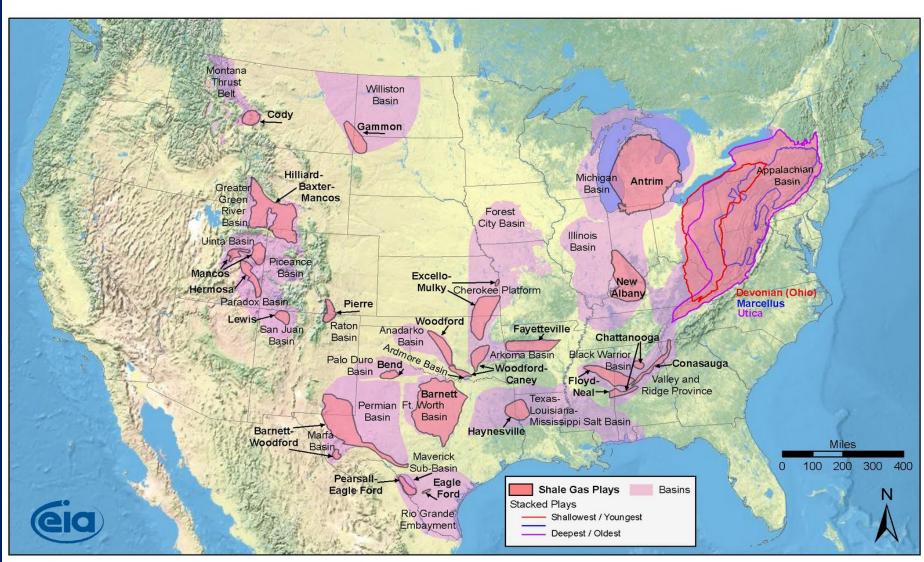
Professional Geoscientist

CURA Environmental & Emergency Services

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Shale Gas Plays, Lower 48 States



Source: Energy Information Administration based on data from various published studies Updated: May 28, 2009

"And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

 Oil companies – "it has never been proven that an oil or gas well has contaminated an aquifer."



"And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

- Environmentalists
 - "every oil and gas well has contaminated all our aquifers."

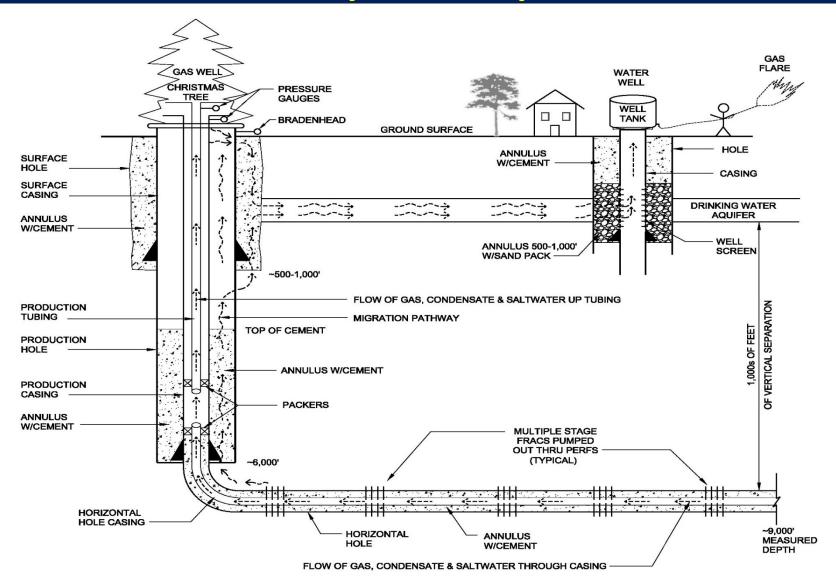


"And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

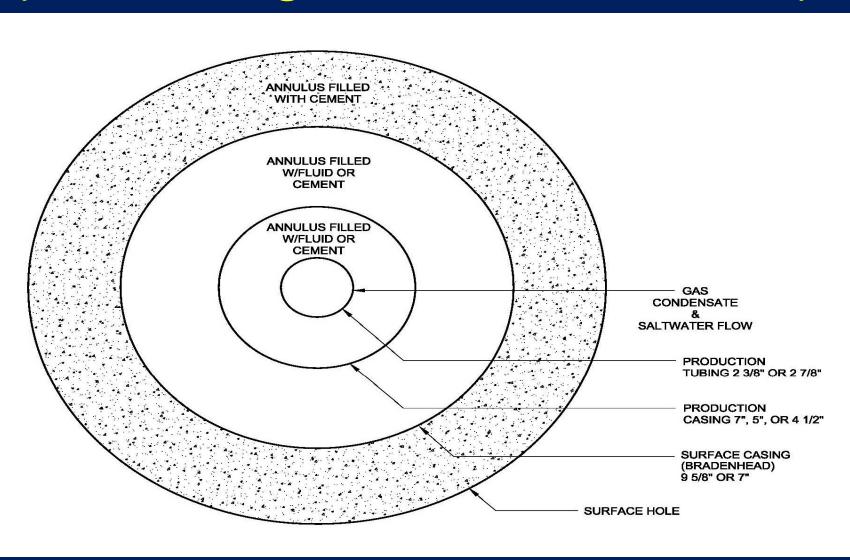
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 Environmentalists – "every oil and gas well has contaminated all our aquifers."

The Physical System

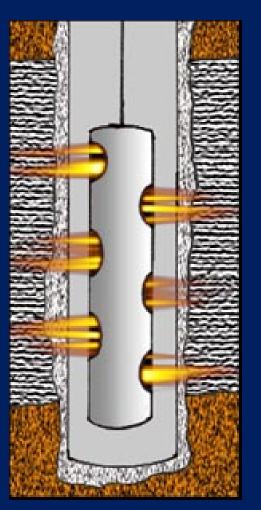


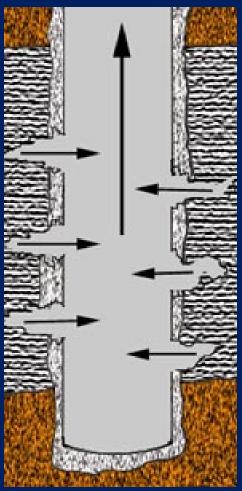
Well Geometry (view looking down on the wellhead)



Jet Perforation







Well Site during Frac



Litigation Support

- Tools & methods for investigation
- Generally presented from simplest tools to more complex least expensive to most expensive

Plan for Investigation

- Proximity
- Timing of the impact
- Other contaminant sources
- Oil & gas well records
- Pressure data from the gas well
- Pressure data from the water well

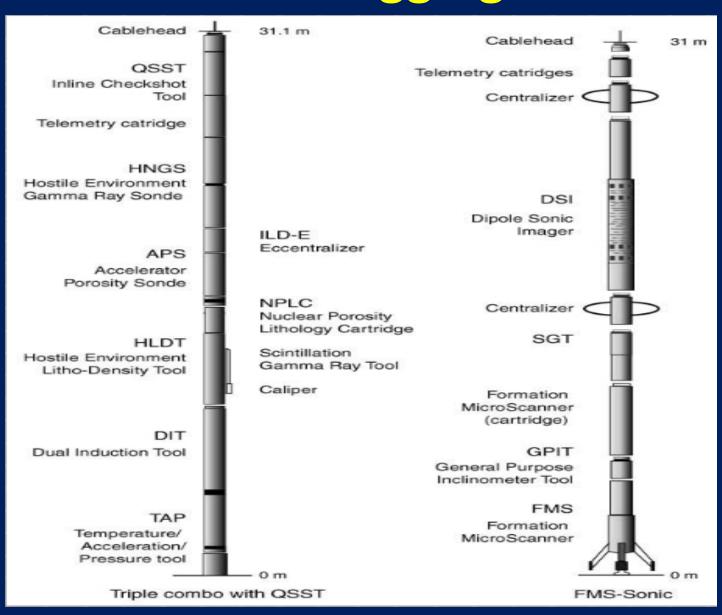
Plan for Investigation

- Data on frac geometry
- Natural gas composition
- Condensate composition
- Water composition
- Seismic data
- Cement bond logs

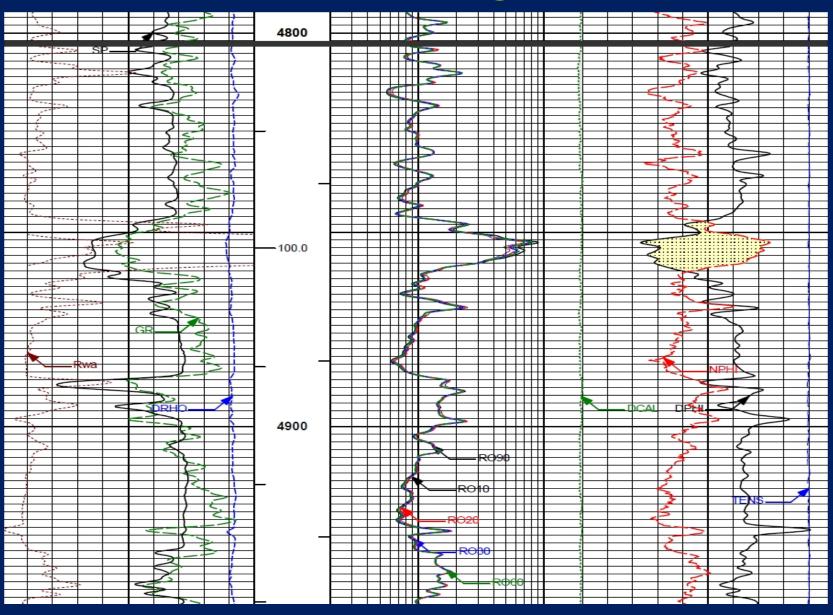
Wireline Logging Truck



Wireline Logging Tool



Well Log



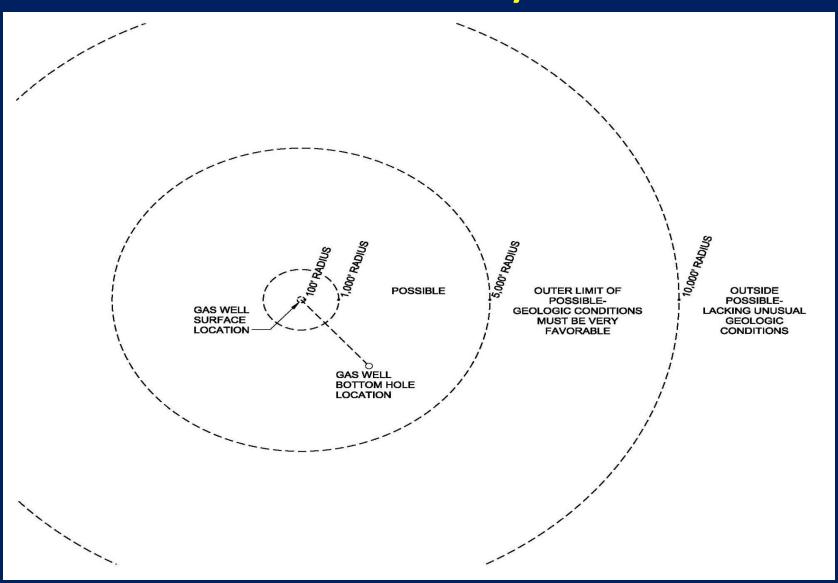
Plan for Investigation

- Noise logs
- Temperature logs
- Gamma ray logs
- Radioactive tracers
- Pressure interference tests
- Installation of monitoring wells

Proximity

- Radius of influence of wells dependent upon geology:
 - —Porosity (void space in the rock that is filled with fluids and/or gas)
 - –Permeability (ability of the rock to transmit fluids and/or gas)
 - Pressure gradients
 - Special geologic conditions (faults, fractures, etc.)

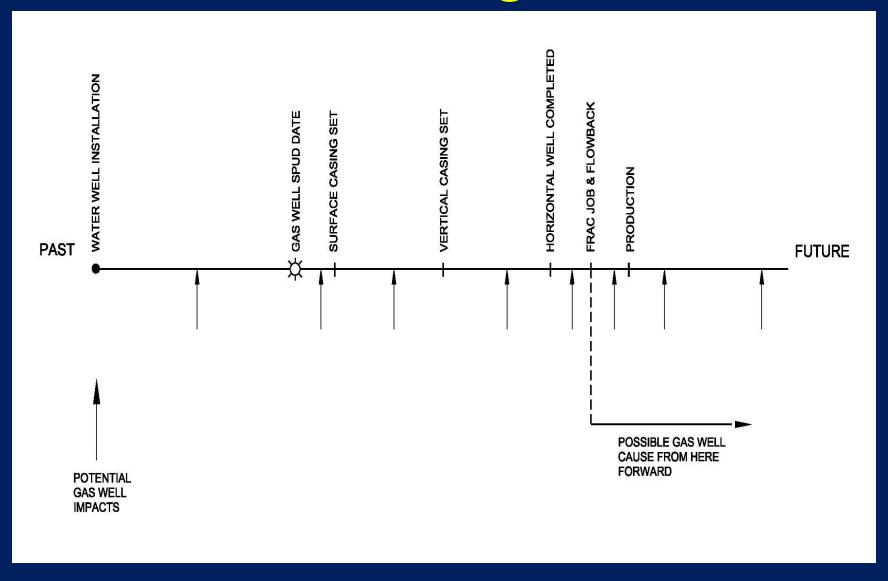
Proximity



Timing

- Water well installation
- Gas well installation:
 - Spud date
 - Surface casing set
 - Vertical casing set
 - Horizontal well completed & casing set
 - Frac job and flow back
 - Production
- Time of impact to water well

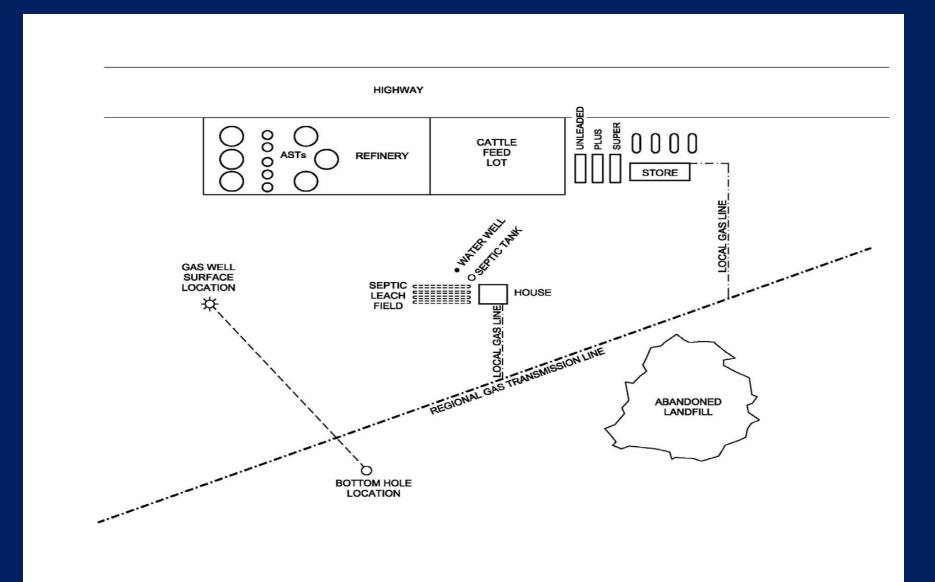
Timing



Other Contaminant Sources

- A variety of other sources may be available
- Common sources are usually shallow within 50 feet of surface
- Impact to deeper aquifers from shallow sources unlikely due to shallow water table & impermeable layers
- Minor amounts of methane occur naturally in aquifers & may be generated by organics in the water well & equipment

Other Contaminant Sources



Oil & Gas Well Records

- W-1 Drilling Permit Application
- G-1 or W-2 Gas or Oil Well Completion Test
- G-5 Gas Well Classification Report
- Railroad Commission Online Research
 - -http://www.rrc.state.tx.us/data/index.php
- Railroad Commission Public GIS Map Viewer
 - -http://gis2.rrc.state.tx.us/public/startit.htm

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RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS Oil and Gas Division

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GAS WELL

Form G-5

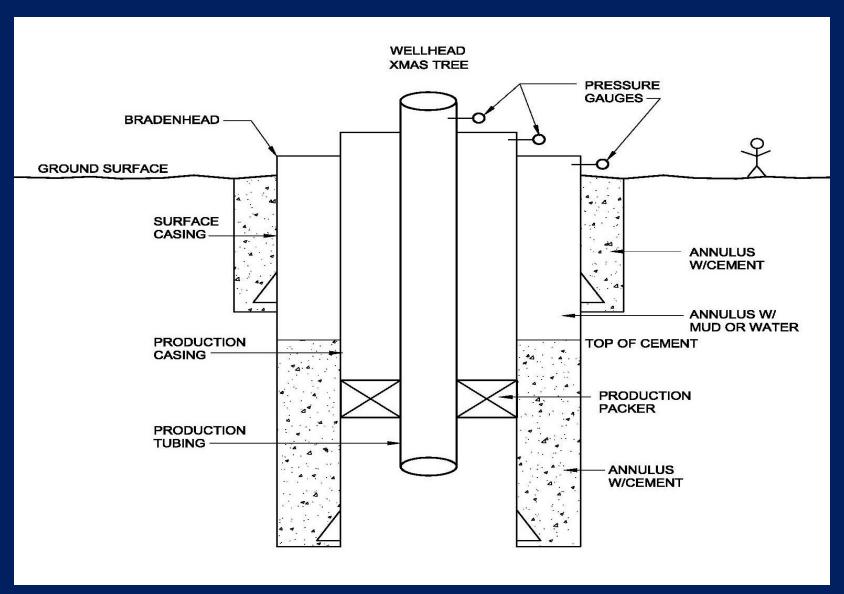
READ INSTRUCTIONS ON BACK

CLASSIFICATION REPORT

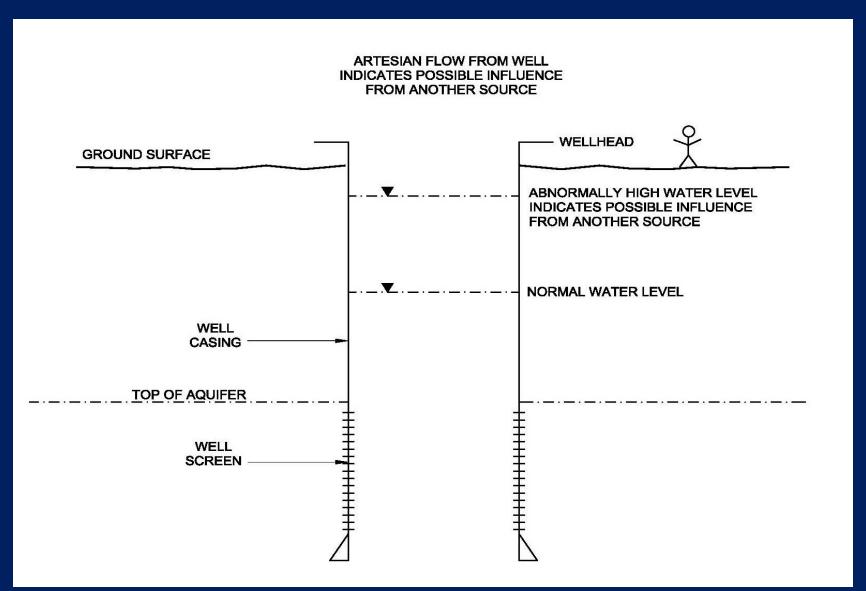
Bay: 01/01/86 DBC1297

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2 MAILING ADDRESS 100 Throckmorton, Suite 120 Fort Worth, TX 76102		5.	WELL NO.	6. API NO.					
		7.	COUNTY OF WELL SE	42- 221-31798 WELL SITE					
8. FIELD NAME (as per BRC Records) Newark, East (Barnott Shale)	9.1	LEASE NAME Teal Unit	nova						
16. LOCATION Section, Block, and Survey) Sec Blk Atwood, J B A-802	11.	MPSUNS CONNECTION OF Peregrine Pipelin	RUSEOFGAS Se Company L.P						
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N. Specific Gravity of the Gas , 738 (Air = 1)		Loss		percent .					
I declare under penalties presented in Sec. 91.143, Texas Natural Resources Code, that I am authorized to make this report, that this report was prepared by me or under my supervision and direction, and that data and facts stated thereis are true, decreed, and complete to the best of my knowledge.	Molanie Dennis NAME (Type or F SKUNATURE Regulatory Anal	Dennis) 1yst	IAN	0 6 2010 RECEIVEDAS JAN 0 6 2010					
9/23/09 DATE	Melanie Dennis CONTACT FERSON	PHONEN	YILASED	TR 1/5/10					

Pressure Data from Gas Well



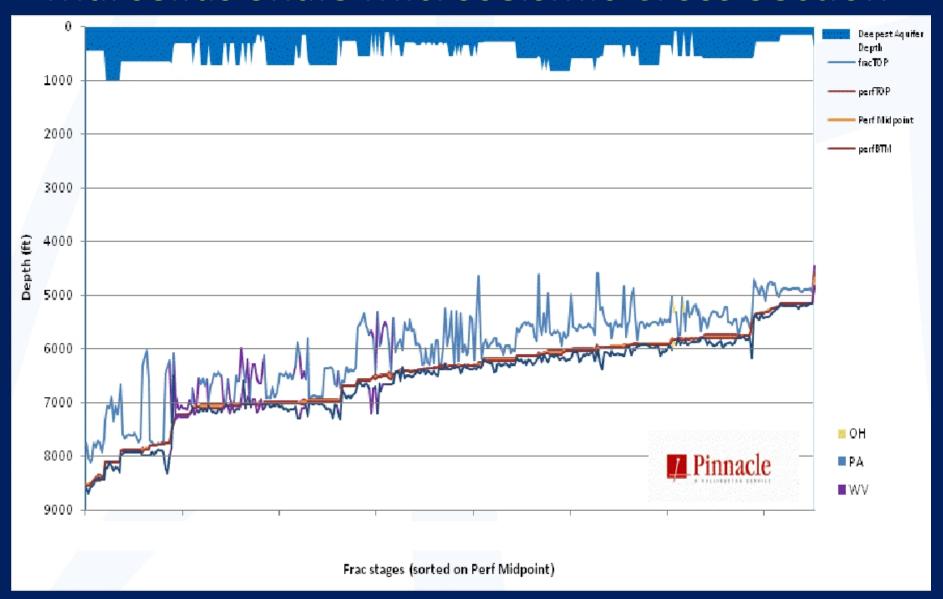
Pressure Data from Water Well



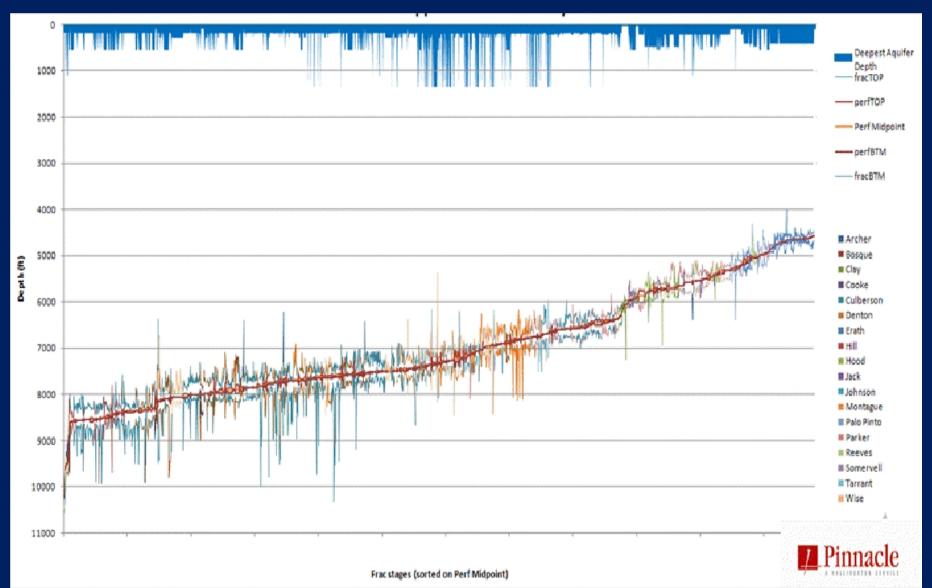
Data on Frac Geometry

- Microseismic records the location of the miniearthquakes generated by frac creation
- Microseismic not routinely run on frac jobs
- Data presented by industry based on relatively few data points
- Fractures may extend a max of 2,000' above or below perfs (usually only a few 100')
- Fractures 3,000' + below deepest aquifer

Marcellus Shale Microseismic Cross Section



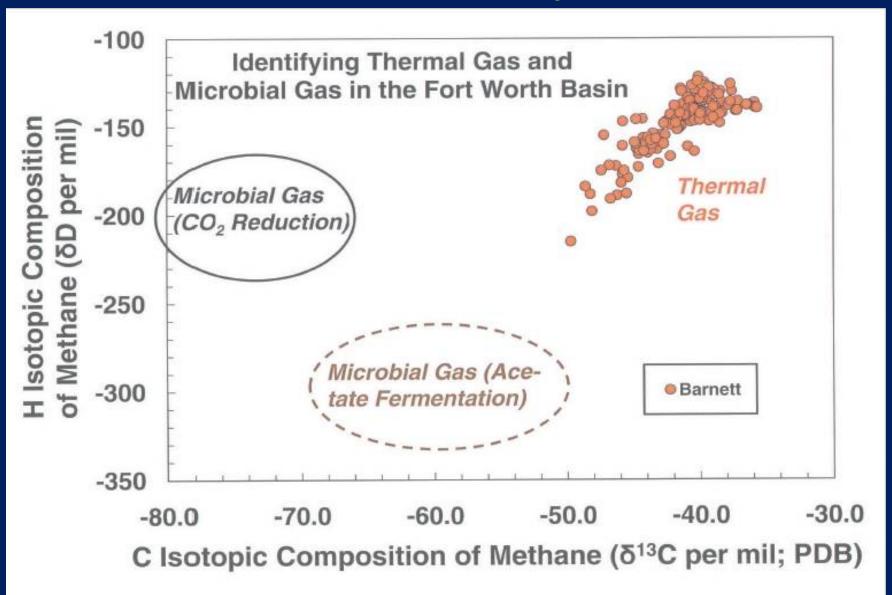
Barnett Shale Microseismic Cross Section



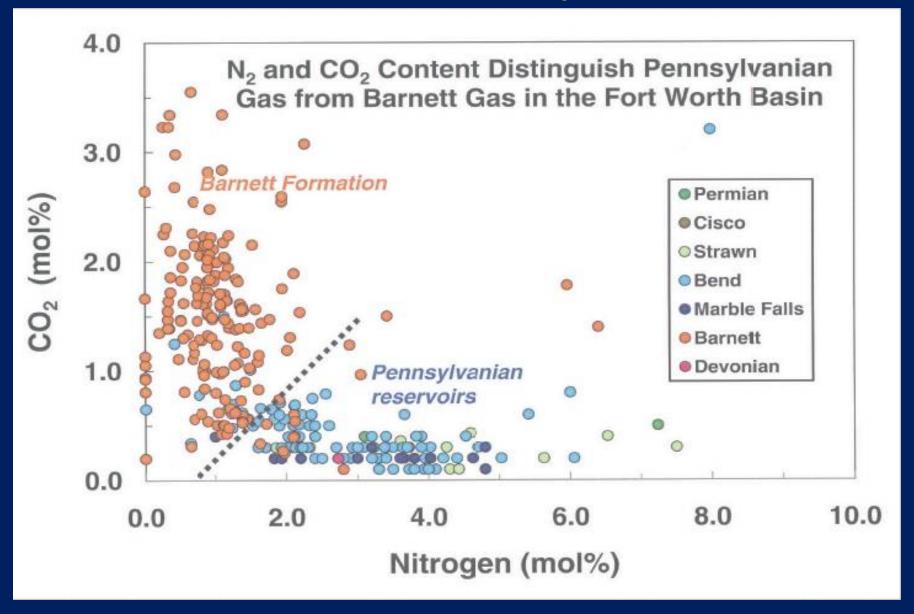
Natural Gas Composition

- Methane CH₄ natural gas
 - Microbial gas
 - Thermal gas
 - Carbon & hydrogen isotopic composition
- Heavier gases
- N₂ and CO₂ content

Natural Gas Composition



Natural Gas Composition



Condensate Composition

- Gas well condensate composed of:
 - TPH (total petroleum hydrocarbons) mainly gasoline range organics
 - BTEX (benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, xylenes) –
 marker constituents
 - VOC (volatile organic compounds)
 - PAH (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons)

Water Composition (dissolved constituents)

- TPH gas, diesel, & oil range organics
- BTEX benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, xylenes
- VOC volatile organic compounds
- PAH polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons
- TPH, BTEX, VOC, & PAH not normally present in water well water

Water Composition (dissolved constituents)

- Methane CH₄ natural gas
 - Lab analysis for methane & other gases
 - Flame ionization detector with carbon filter
 - Methane meter
 - Explosimeter
 - Light it?
 - Methane not normally present in high concentrations in water well water

Water Composition (dissolved constituents)

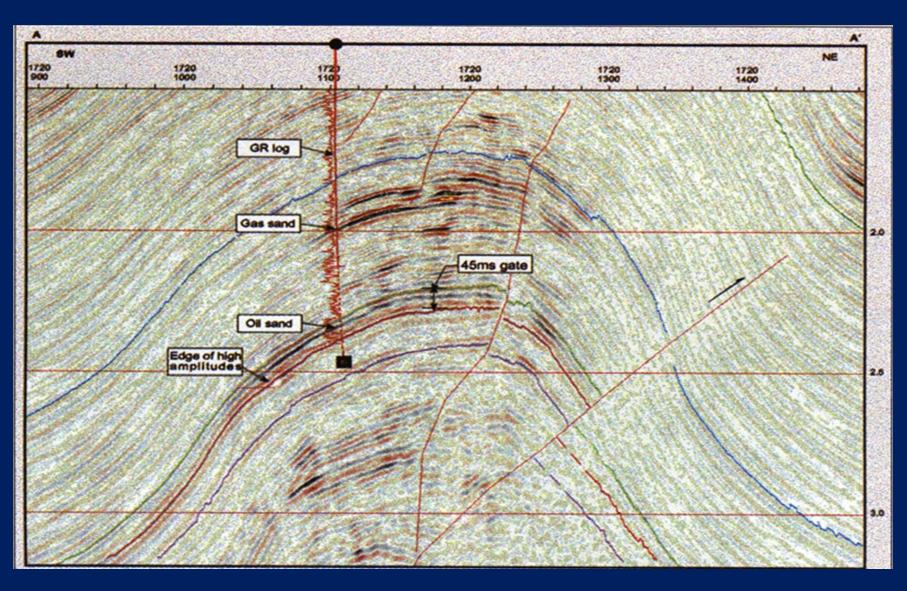
- Minerals & salts naturally occurring
- TDS (total dissolved solids) & chlorides measure dissolved minerals & salts in water
- TDS total dissolved solids
 - Water wells (500 1,800 ppm)
 - Gas wells (typically > 20,000 ppm)
- Chlorides
 - Water wells (20 500 ppm)
 - Gas wells (typically > 20,000 ppm)

Seismic Data

- Seismic or sound waves used to image the subsurface
- Analogous to sonograms
- Gas accumulations give a "bright spot" amplitude anomaly
- 3D seismic is available over most oilfields



Seismic "Bright Spots"



Seismic Data (Potential Problems)

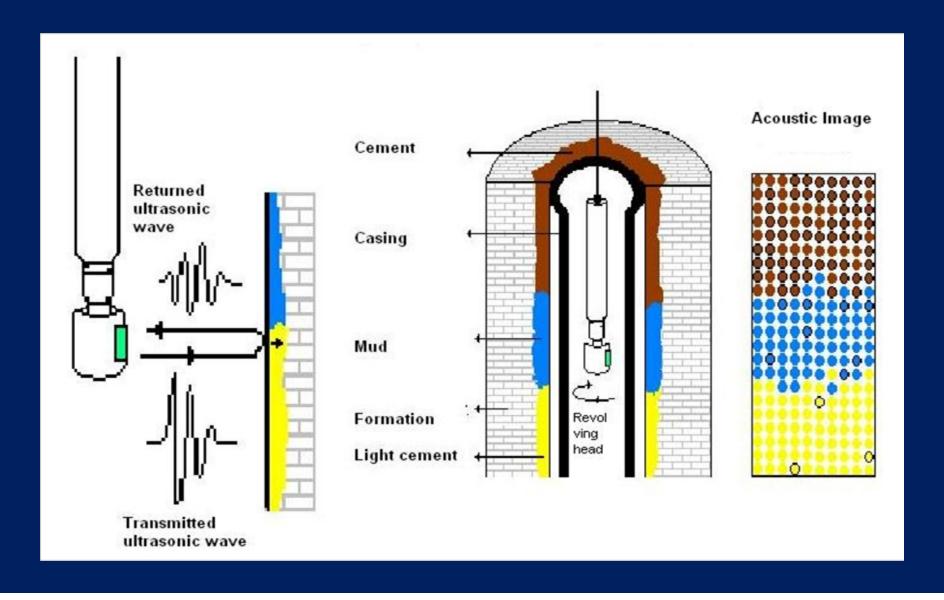
- Timing of data acquisition relative to gas accumulation
- Seismic data focus may not yield useable data in shallow subsurface
- Zone of gas accumulation too thin for seismic resolution
- "Bright spot" not a unique solution for gas

Cement Bond Logs

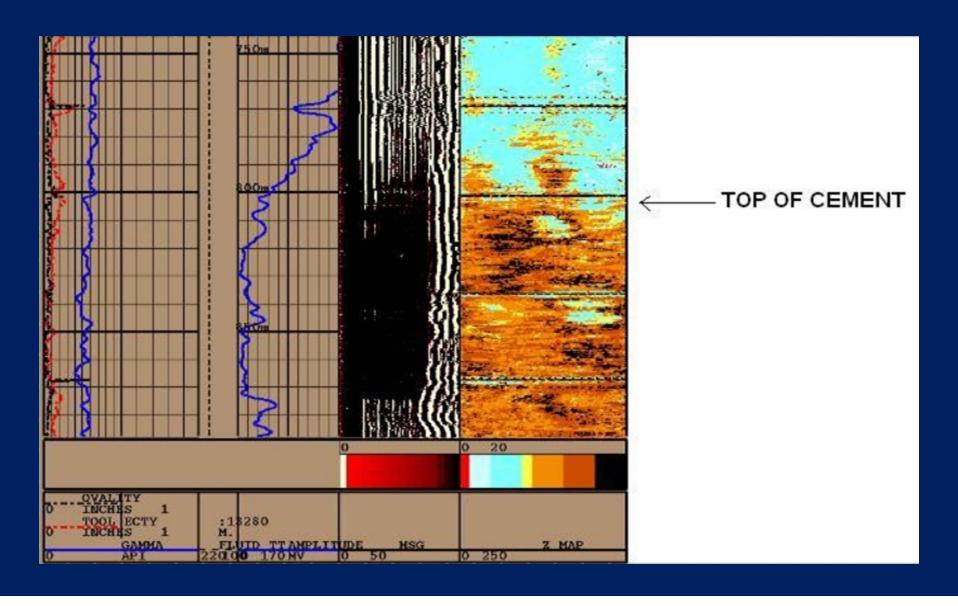
- Acoustic (sonic) device utilizes sound waves to image
- Analogous to sonograms
- Free pipe returns a much greater amplitude signal than cemented pipe
- Amplitude display
- VDL (variable density log) display



Principles of the Cement Bond Log



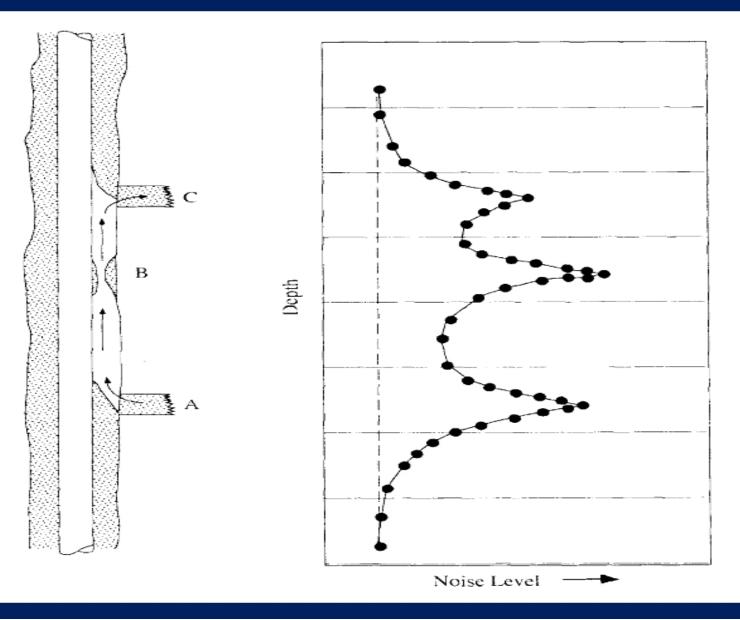
Cement Bond Log Presentation



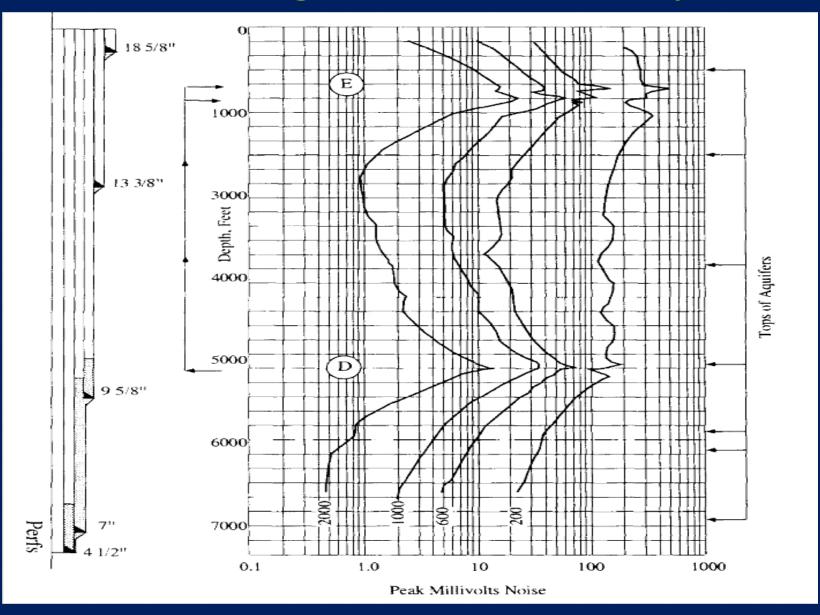
Noise Logs (Sound Surveys)

- Sensor is an underwater microphone (hydrophone)
- Will detect flow within wellbore or behind pipe
- Turbulent fluid flow
- Gas expansion
- Disturbance of gas/liquid interface

Noise Logs (Sound Surveys)



Noise Logs (Sound Surveys)



Temperature Logs

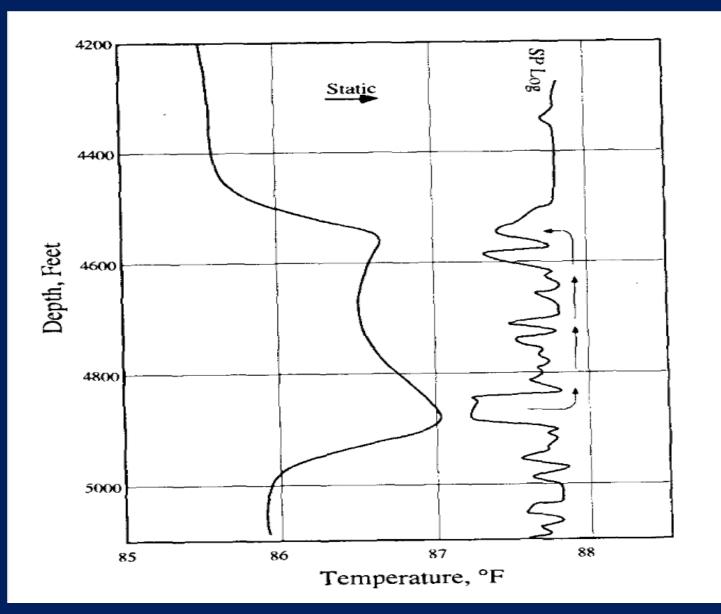
- Temperature increases with depth normal geothermal gradient
- Anomalies created by fluids or gas entering wellbore or annulus or exiting into formation
- Identify zones producing or taking fluid
- Evaluating cement jobs
- Evaluating frac jobs

Temperature Logs

 EPA Underground Injection Control (UIC) program approves temperature logs to demonstrate well mechanical integrity –

"no significant fluid movement into an underground source of drinking water through vertical channels adjacent to the injection wellbore".

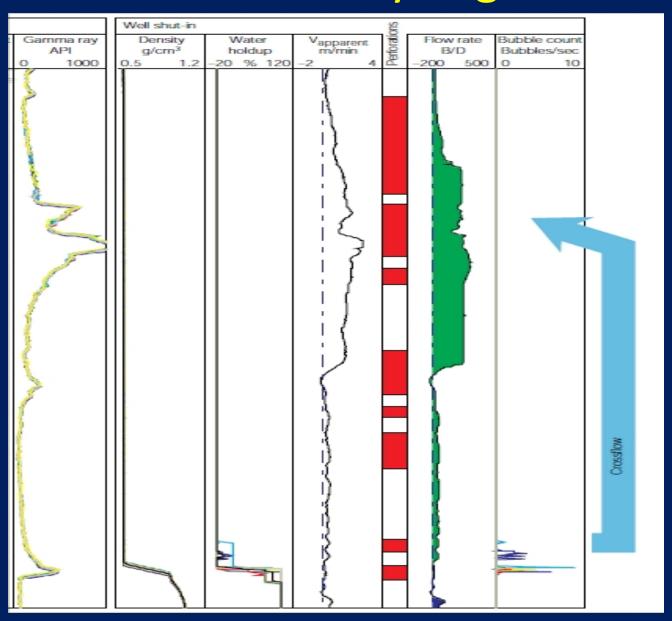
Temperature Logs



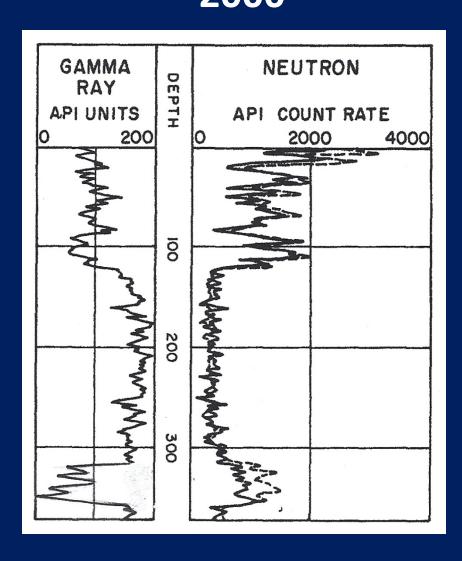
Gamma Ray Logs

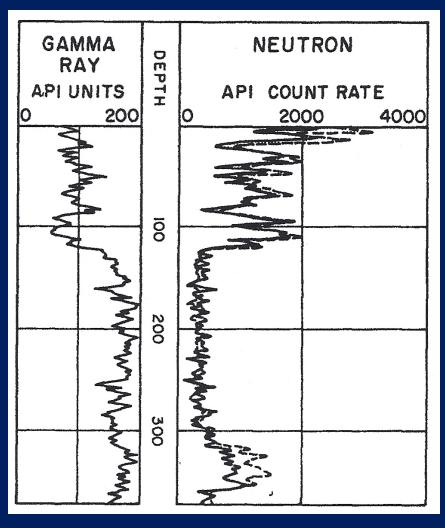
- Measures natural gamma ray emissions from the formation
- Shales high gamma ray emissions
- Sands, limestones low gamma ray emissions
- Migration of fluids within & adjacent to the wellbore deposits radioactive salts & zones of migration often marked by high gamma ray emissions

Gamma Ray Logs



Gamma Ray/Neutron Logs 2000 2010





Radioactive Tracers

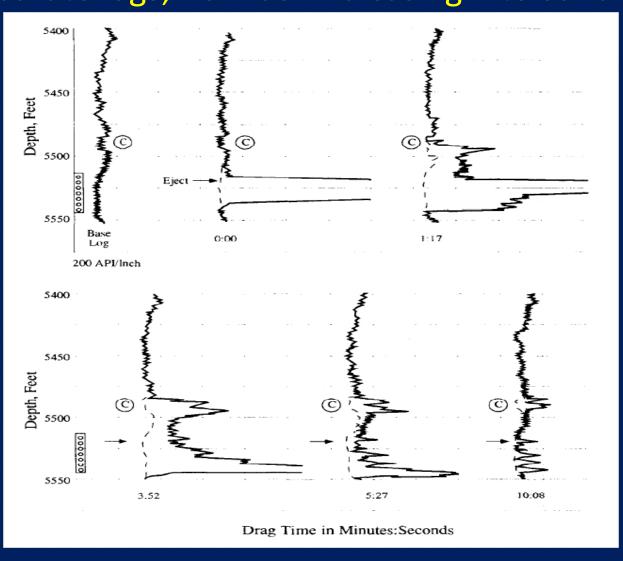
- Tracer is a radioactive isotope that is soluble in gas, oil, and water (iodine; half life 8.1 days)
- Gamma radiation emitted by the tracer is detected by a gamma ray tool
- Gamma radiation penetrates steel, PVC pipe, cement, & formation
- 90% of gamma radiation recorded originates within 1 foot of the detector

Radioactive Tracers

- Tool can inject tracer and record gamma emissions simultaneously
- Fluid movement & velocity & volume can be monitored within a well, behind casing, & between wells

Radioactive Tracers

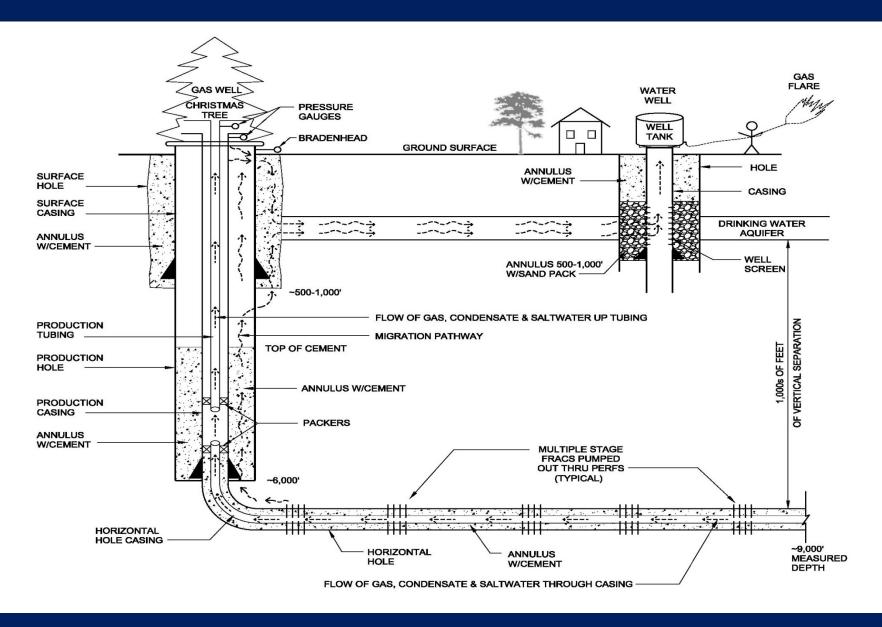
(Well on injection into perfs; 5-log runs presented on separate logs; flow behind casing into Sand C)



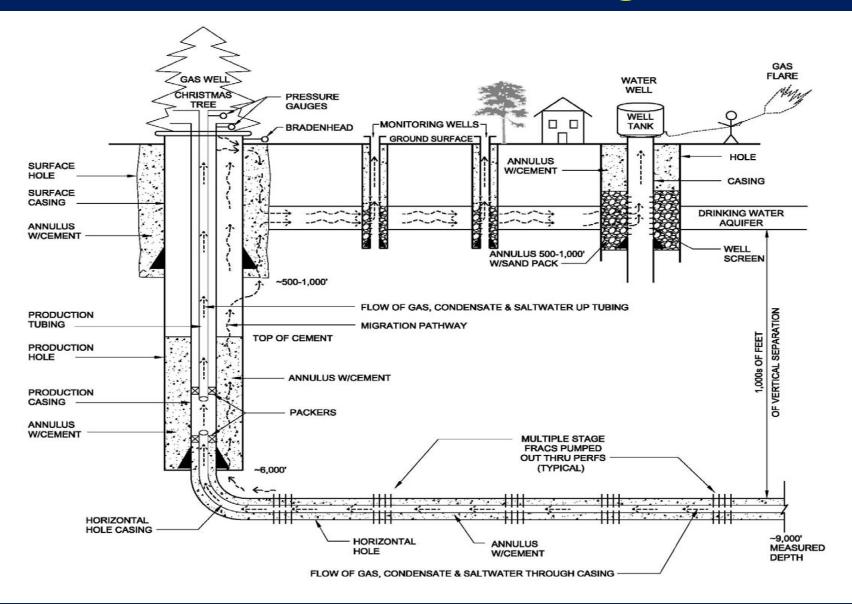
Pressure Interference Tests

- Downhole pressure gauge installed in the water well
- Pressure wave created in gas well by producing well & shutting it in intermittently
- Pressure changes recorded in water well
- Cross contamination requires hydraulic connection between gas well & water well

Pressure Interference Tests



Installation of Monitoring Wells



Summary

- 18 different investigative tools can we solve the contamination problem??
- Choose the most time effective tools
- Choose the most cost effective tools
- Choose the tools that will support our case
- Find the "truth"

"And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

 Oil companies – "it has never been proven that an oil or gas well has contaminated an aquifer."

 Environmentalists – "every oil and gas well has contaminated all our aquifers."

GAS WELL/WATER WELL SUBSURFACE CONTAMINATION

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