

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Secretary of Energy Advisory Board Subcommittee (SEAB) on Shale Gas Production released its second and final ninety-day report reviewing the progress that has been made in implementing the twenty recommendations in its initial report of August 18, 2011. The Subcommittee was tasked with producing a report on the immediate steps that can be taken to improve the safety and environmental performance of shale gas development. The Subcommittee believes that these recommendations, if implemented, would help to assure that the nation’s considerable shale gas resources are being developed responsibly, in a way that protects human health and the environment and is most beneficial to the nation.

The Subcommittee’s judgment that if action is not taken to reduce the environmental impact accompanying the very considerable expansion of shale gas production expected across the country – perhaps as many as 100,000 wells over the next several decades – there is a real risk of serious environmental consequences and a loss of public confidence that could delay or stop this activity. Thus, the Subcommittee’s interest in assessing and reporting on the progress that is being made on implementing its recommendations, or some sensible variations of the recommendations.

The Subcommittee is gratified by the actions that have been taken to date and are planned, by the administration, state governments, industry, and public interest groups to reduce the environmental impact of shale gas production. However, the progress to date is less than the Subcommittee hoped. The Subcommittee cautions that whether its approach is followed or not, some concerted and sustained action is needed to avoid excessive environmental impacts of shale gas production and the consequent risk of public opposition to its continuation and expansion.

Subcommittee Chairman John Deutch, an MIT professor, said: “Industry, working with state and federal regulators and public interest groups, should increase their best field engineering practices and environmental control activities by adopting the objective of continuous improvement, validated by measurement and disclosure of key operating metrics. This is the surest path forward to assure that shale gas is produced in an environmentally sound fashion, and in a way that meets the needs of public trust.”

“The development of shale gas is one of the biggest energy innovations, if not the biggest, in several decades,” continued Deutch. “It is now about 30 percent of total U.S. natural gas production; it has reduced energy costs and created hundreds of thousands of jobs. But to ensure the full benefits to the American people, environmental issues need to be addressed now – especially in terms of waste water, air quality, and community impact. We believe that our twenty recommendations provide the basis for a pragmatic route forward and hope that they will be acted upon.”

Secretary of Energy Steven Chu convened the Shale Gas Production Subcommittee at the direction of President Barack Obama, who observed that “recent innovations have given us the opportunity to tap large reserves—perhaps a century’s worth” of shale gas. The Subcommittee’s draft Second Ninety-Day report is available for public comment and will be reviewed the SEAB on November 14 and then forwarded to Secretary of Energy Steven Chu. The two reports reflect six months of deliberations among a diverse group of industry experts, environmental advocates, academics and former state regulators.

Members of the Subcommittee: John Deutch, MIT; Stephen Holditch, Texas A&M; Fred Krupp, Environmental Defense Fund; Kathleen McGinty, Weston Solutions; Susan Tierney, Analysis Group; Daniel Yergin, IHS-Cambridge Energy Research Associates; Mark Zoback, Stanford University

Both Subcommittee reports are available on the web at <http://www.shalegas.energy.gov/index.html>. For further information contact: Stephanie Mueller, DOE 202 586 4940