

Responses Related to Shale Gas Governance from the General Elicitation

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Abstract

The development of natural gas resources in deep shale formations is accompanied by a wide range of concerns among interested and affected parties. A broadly based, open-ended internet-based elicitation of concerns yielded 372 responses, within which we identified 131 unique concerns. Most of the concerns raised addressed possible negative consequences of shale gas development, but approximately 21% of the concerns (531 codable responses) related instead to risk governance issues. These fell into 6 areas of concern: corporate culture and practice, regulatory shortcomings, inadequacy of information, unfairness in legal systems/regimes, distributive/environmental justice, and inadequate public participation. Underlying these 6 areas of concern, we identify three broad themes. One concerns science and relates to whether there is a sufficient level of scientific understanding to make informed decisions and to the transparency of knowledge generation and its dissemination. A second is trust, involving expressions of a lack of trust in governmental and other institutions to protect people and the environment from the risks of development. The third is justice: the distribution of risks and benefits and the procedures by which decisions are made as it relates to individuals, communities, world nations, and future generations. These underlying issues deserve consideration in developing governance regimes aimed at effectively addressing the risks and achieving broad acceptance.

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