WPX Energy On Eliminating Trucking & Recycling Nearly 100% of Produced Water In The Rockies

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Are regulatory updates across the Rockies states encouraging or hindering reusing produced water for fracking?

For us, in the Piceance basin, I'm going to say encouraging. The state is really supportive of water sharing agreements within the Piceance basin. So that's a yes.

There is a lot of pressure towards reusing produced water for fracking currently – how can operators manage these pressures?

I believe most operators want to reuse their water, and for us there are regulatory pressures. Because we use slick water approach to complete our wells, it makes it easier for us to recycle our water. When you go to the front range, where operators' chemistry requires a more complicated completion fluid, it becomes more difficult. So here, it's very straightforward.

For us, there is a cost of recycling the produced water, but it makes more sense than pulling freshwater out of the river; this gives us a real advantage.

Water sources are under stress from industries besides the oil and gas industry, do you believe reusing produced water is the solution to water sourcing issues?

Using produced water is a good option for all operators. Obviously, there are economic restraints depending on the quality of water you have to clean and where you have to take it to, to reuse it. Locally, we're sensitive to the stress of sourcing freshwater - obviously in Colorado, water is key to everyone. We made the switch to recycling close to 100% of our produced water and really, in the local community's eyes, it made sense. It's something that we're proud of.

What kinds of water treatments do you use? Which are the most successful?

For us, we're not addressing the overall TDS, we're just cleaning up the water to a level where we can send it back out to the field to use for completions. We have a very in-depth treating program – the main treating process we use is the DAF (dissolved air floatation), which removes all solids and residual hydrocarbons so we can send clean water back out to the field.

In the Piceance Basin, WPX recycles nearly 100% of your water - can you explain how this is managed through your in-house recycling plant?

WPX Energy has two main facilities where we treat and store clean water. It's a very good approach in regards to communication within the company and the different facets between production, completions and water management that ensures we have the proper storage and volumes required for our completion operations. It's a very integrated process amongst the teams here locally that ensures we have the right amount of water stored and available for completions. When we get in times of excess, we really have to watch that to avoid costs associated with disposal.

What projects are you working on to transport water from the well site to your recycling plant?

What we typically do is try to eliminate any trucking. When we develop our fields, when possible we install water lines with our gas lines. Through this approach we extend our water infrastructure to those areas of development, so that we can move high rate water to our completion operations, and once the completion is done, we try to have our infrastructure in place so that we can pump all that water back and not truck it.

And this is very similar to what your presentation will be on at the conference- can you briefly outline what you'll be speaking about?

What I'll talk about is our strategy on recycling water and give a quick overview of our flow process, the water treatment facilities, and then also talk about what that means. This includes how we set up our future completion areas and how we move that water throughout the field. As well as what we do to eliminate trucking, and also I'll talk a little bit about our solids management, because we do have to deal with some degree of solids – that can be quite costly. Solids are a key point in the economics.

Why is it important for you to speak at this event, and why should other professionals in the water management industry attend?

For us, its been a couple of years since we attended the conference, we're looking for new technologies, new ways to treat our water.

So you're looking to meet providers of water treatment solutions?

Exactly. What we see is the technology is changing rapidly, and there are people looking at ways to improve the efficiencies of reused water. We want to stay at the forefront of that.