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A federal judge for the U.S. District Court of Wyoming has placed a hold on the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) new rules for hydraulic fracturing on federal lands. The BLM originally proposed these rules in 2012 to address underground injection of wastewater, which is currently the purview of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the Clean Water Act. The rules would require well operators to case and cement the wellbore in accordance with best practices in order to protect groundwater; store and treat recovered wastewater in above-ground storage tanks; disclose the chemicals used in fracturing fluids, except for those designated as trade secrets; and submit more detailed surveys of subsurface geology before drilling begins.

The rules were set to take effect on June 24, but will be postponed at least until BLM files a record of its rulemaking process in July. North Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and two energy industry consortiums filed preliminary injunctions against the regulations to halt them. State governments have argued that the BLM's rules are redundant and that the agency does not have jurisdiction to enforce them. The judge has not yet granted the injunctions and is not expected to make that decision until August; this ruling is only a temporary stay.

Sources: Department of the Interior, E&E News, Federal Register, Lexology.com
