

The most overlooked finding in groundbreaking shale study

By [David Hunn](#) Published 8:56 am, Wednesday, June 21, 2017

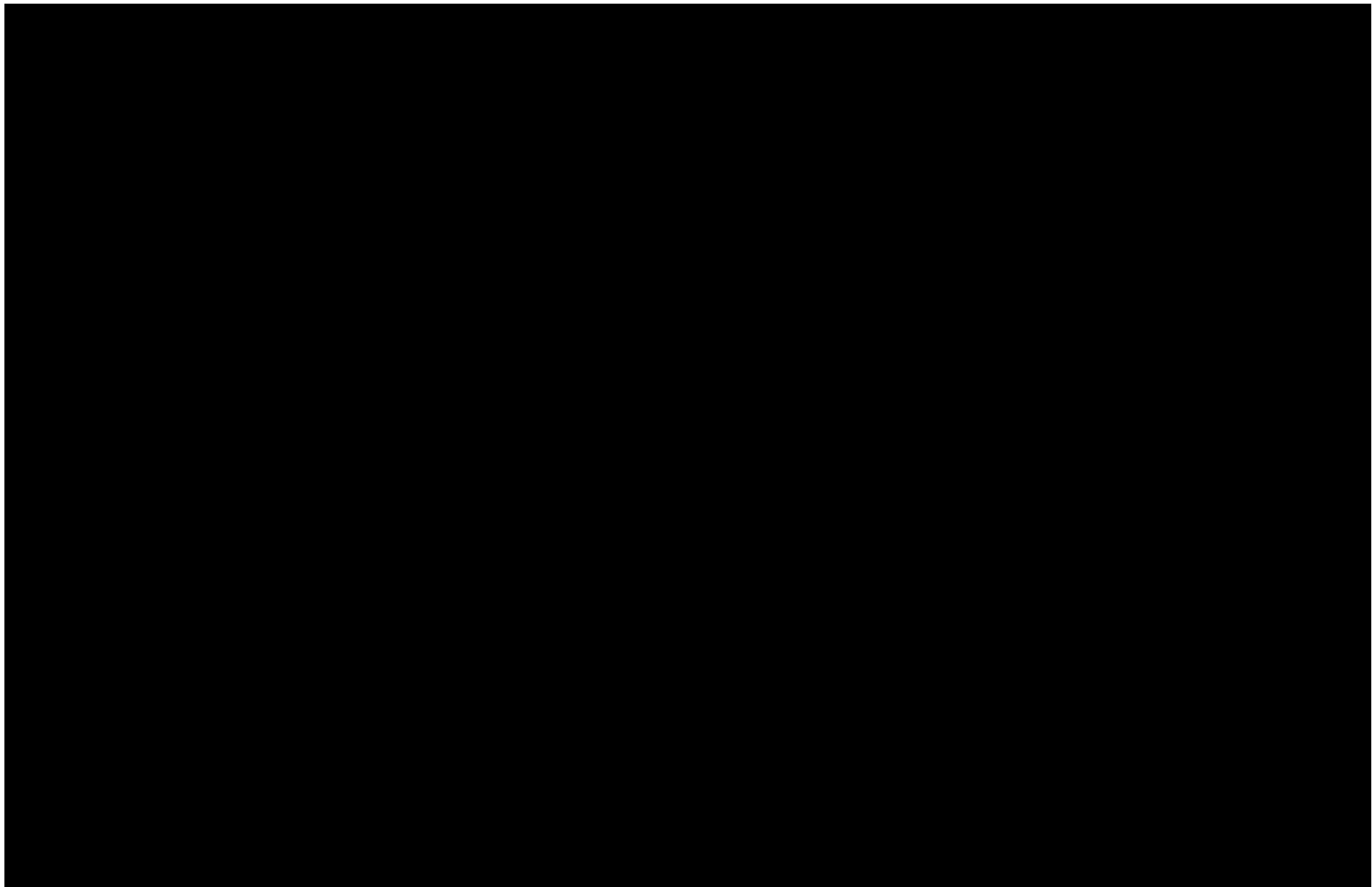







Photo: Michael Ciaglo, Staff

IMAGE 1 OF 4

A Diamondback Energy rig drills for oil and gas outside of Midland. The Permian Basin has accounted for three-fourths of production growth in U.S. shale basins.

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One of the most important discoveries from this week's groundbreaking Texas shale oil and gas report has gone missing from public discussion.

The [study](#), by the state's top scientists, [highlighted a litany of findings](#), some positive — such as the annual gross product from Texas shale drilling of more than \$470 billion — and others alarming, such as the unknown effect of air pollution and the marked increase in traffic deaths from oil field trucks.

But a key point, the researchers said, was buried in the report's last chapter:

The environmental and social effects of shale oil and gas production in Texas are interconnected. Scientists, regulators and the industry itself cannot continue to consider them independently, and must instead look at how they impact each other.

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[Michael Young](#), a [University of Texas](#) hydrogeologist, associate director at the state [Bureau of Economic Geology](#) and member of the research task force, said

that's what makes this report unique.

Most studies on oil and gas production focus on one problem, perhaps air pollution, species habitat destruction, water contamination or roadway deterioration.

"But these are all connected," Young said.

Say, for instance, a company needs to figure out how to get oil to market from a new field. Many consider pipelines safer than trucking. What if, however, those pipelines would have to be built through sensitive species habitats? To build a pipeline, companies have to clear-cut a wide right-of-way, dividing animal habitat, disrupting species' travel and separating animals from food sources, nesting, and each other. "That's known as fragmentation," Young said.

Roadways, on the other hand, are already built.

The pipeline may still be better, Young noted. But companies, scientists and regulators should consider all effects before making such such decisions.

"All of these things have upsides and downsides," Young said. "We wanted to have an appreciation for how all those are connected. That to me, is where the report is unique."

For more information, see [Table 6-2 in the report](#), on page 120, and Chapter 9, which starts on page 165.

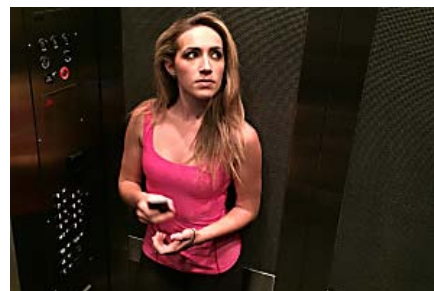
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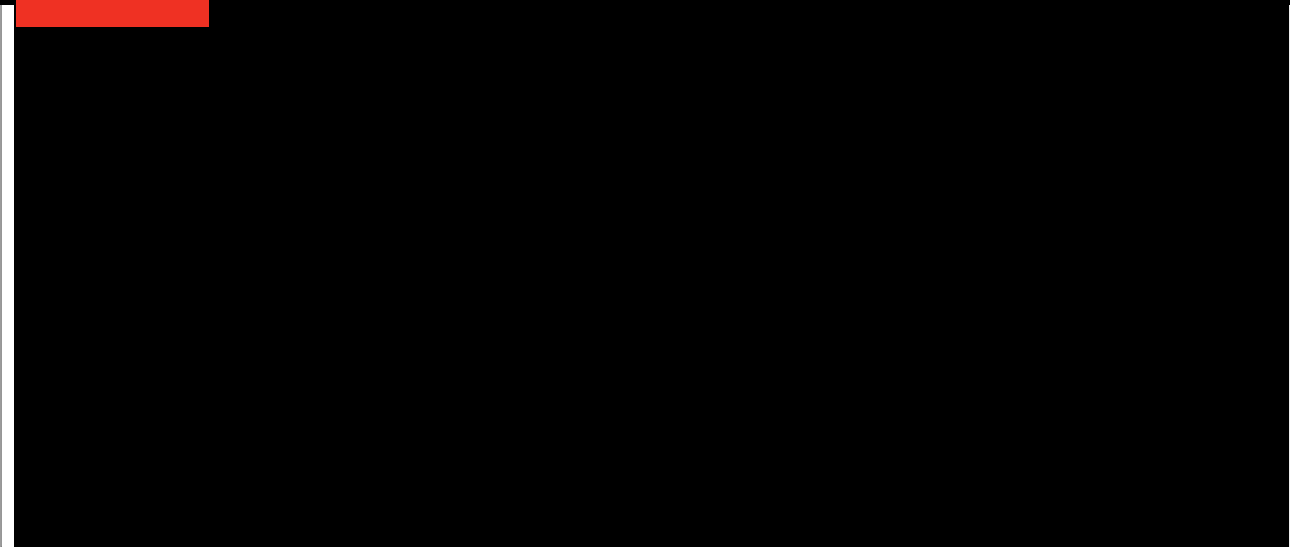
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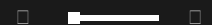
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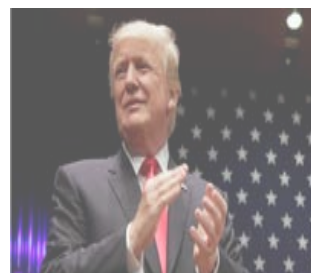
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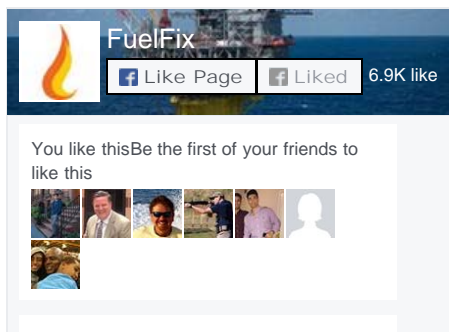
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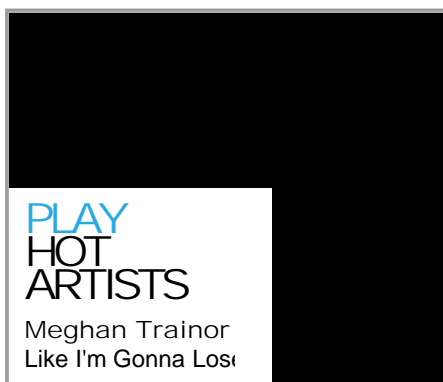
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"This announcement marks the end of the solely combustion engine-powered car," Volvo CEO Hakan Samuelsson.

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