Coast Guard denies approving barge shipment of drilling waste

By Katelyn Ferral  Business Writer
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The U.S. Coast Guard has denied statements by GreenHunter Resources that it has given the Texas-based water management company clearance to ship wastewater from shale drillers by barge along the Ohio River.

The Coast Guard said Wednesday that it had not taken final action on a 2012 request by GreenHunter Resources “to transport shale gas extraction wastewater and has not classified this cargo for shipment.”

GreenHunter Resources, based in Grapevine, Texas, said in a statement to investors on its website that it received approval from the Coast Guard late last year. The company’s vice president of business development, John Jack, did not immediately respond to phone and email messages.

Earlier, Jack had said he “can't confirm nor deny” the decision but that the company has been working with the Coast Guard on the issue for three years.

The Coast Guard, which regulates the nation’s waterways, is considering a policy proposal that would open the nation’s rivers to shipment of waste fluids from fracking. The agency has not said when it will finalize rules that were proposed in October 2013.

“We are committed to ensuring proper research with regards to shale gas extraction waste water maritime transportation before approving any request to transport shale gas extraction waste water,” the agency said in a statement.

Environmental groups have criticized plans to allow drilling waste to be transported by barge, saying that a spill could contaminate a primary source of drinking water. Proponents say barges would be cheaper and more efficient than using trucks to transport waste to recycling centers or disposal sites. They also argue that it would help reduce noise and carbon pollution from waste disposal trucks that have outraged residents in some communities.

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