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City researcher part of frack-water study

BY DAVID BEARD

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Evan Hansen, of Downstream Strategies in Morgantown, is one of three researchers participating in a study of the life cycle of fracking water.

The \$40,000 study is funded by the Switzer Foundation, a nonprofit devoted to environmental research. Hansen said he and the other two researchers — professor Dustin Mulvaney, of San Jose State University and Colin Hagan, studying environmental law at Vermont Law School — are Switzer fellows eligible to receive Switzer grants.

The research is part of the Oil and Gas Accountability Project of Earthworks, a nonprofit “dedicated to protecting communities and the environment from the impacts of irresponsible mineral and energy development while seeking sustainable solutions.”

Switzer explained that Hansen and his colleagues will create a Life Cycle Analysis for water use in fracking. The analysis will help create a water “footprint” of the fracking process, addressing the amount of water used, polluted water generated and potential risk to groundwater supplies.

The study will draw site data from different states and watersheds within the



Marcellus Shale region.

Among the topics to be studied: Cross-border wastewater transport; the extent to which land use changes associated with fracking site preparation and drilling activities are being tracked; the extent of greenhouse gas emissions resulting from these changes; a review of the best existing ordinances and regulations that can support local and state-level efforts to appropriately site fracking activities.

Hansen said the project has begun. There is no exact end date set, but they may finish by the middle of this year and hope to publish results this year. Additional submissions to peer-reviewed journals may follow.

Switzer said the study is intended to help local and state efforts to regulate fracking. Hansen added that they hope to present the results of the study broadly, and will plan to present it to the state Legislature. They want to make sure people in the industry and those connected with organizations concerned about the industry have access to the information.