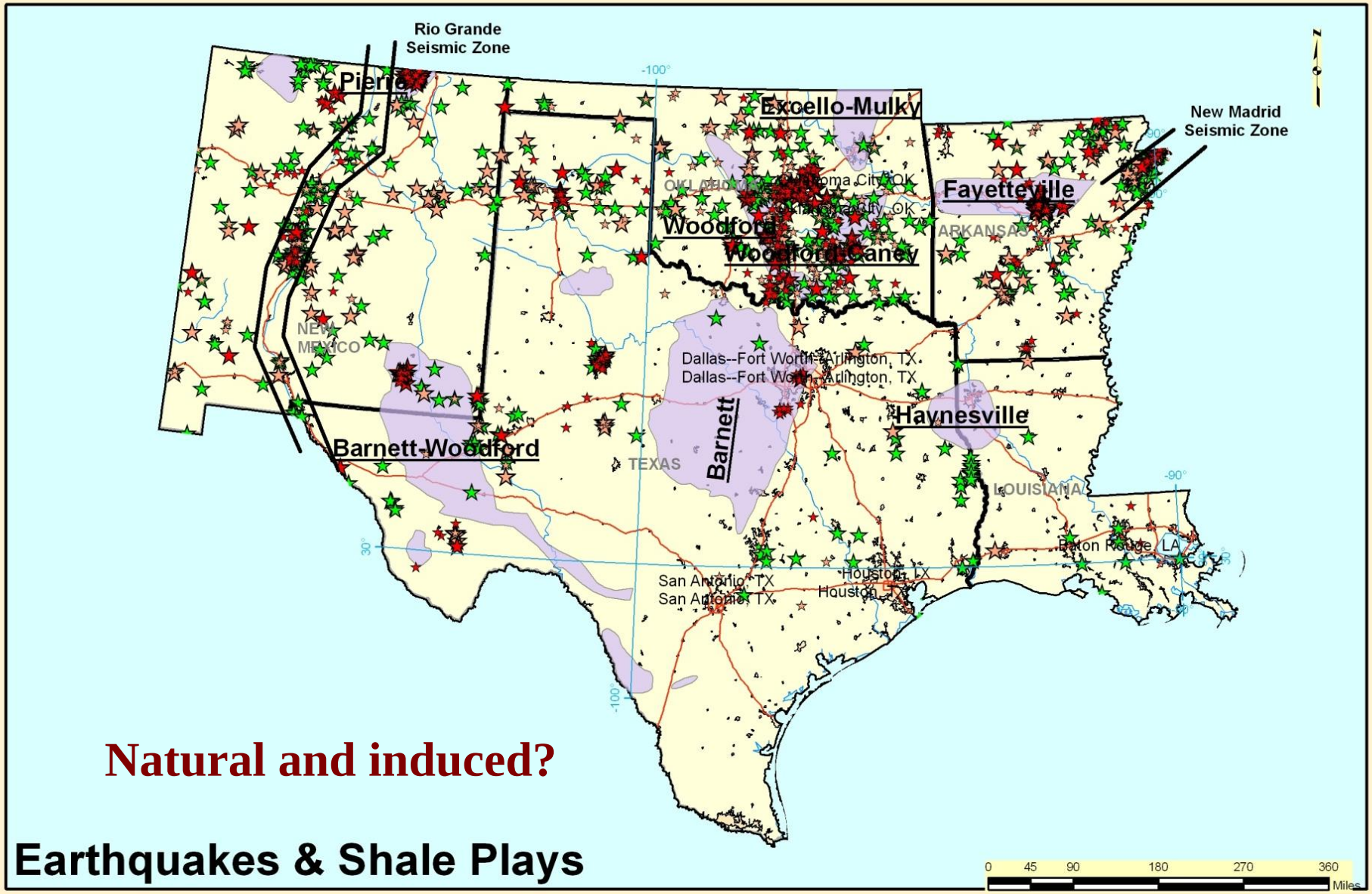
Minimizing and Managing Potential Impacts of Injection-Induced Seismicity from Class II Disposal Wells: Practical Approaches

Philip Dellinger, Chief
Ground Water/UIC Section
EPA Region 6



Natural and induced?

Earthquakes & Shale Plays

Legend

>= 2000	1973-1999	1699-1973
Magnitude	Magnitude	
0.0 - 3.0	0.0 - 3.0	
3.1 - 5.0	3.1 - 5.7	

Urban Areas
Shale Gas Plays: EIA

Albers Projection
Central Meridian: -96
1st Std Parallel: 20
2nd Std Parallel: 60
Latitude of Origin: 40

United States Environmental Protection Agency — Region 6

GROUNDWATER CENTER

Covering Arkansas, Louisiana
New Mexico, Oklahoma & Texas

Overview of Study Approach

- Timeframe for effort
  - Earthquakes updated through 9/30/13.
  - References updated as of 5/23/14.

Overview of Study Approach

- Literature review and compilation
  - Peer reviewed material only
  - Comprehensive, but moving target

Overview of Study Approach

- Analysis of four case examples
  - Central Arkansas Area
  - North Texas Area
  - Braxton County, West Virginia
  - Youngstown, Ohio

Overview of Study Approach

- Analysis of four case examples
  - Geologic site summary
  - History of seismicity
  - State actions
  - Application of reservoir engineering methods
  - Lessons learned

Overview of Study Approach

- Development of decision model
  - Received much input throughout process
  - Comprehensive thought process - not specific
  - Founded on Director Discretionary Authority

DECISION MODEL FOR UIC DIRECTORS

Existing Class II

New Class II

UIC process ← Seismicity Concerns?

Site Assessment

Fault, Pressure buildup, Pathway

UIC process ← Remaining seismicity concerns?

Approaches

Monitoring, Operational, Management

Is there a satisfactory approach? → No permit

UIC process with conditions

Overview of Study Approach

- Fundamentals of induced seismicity
  - Captures a broader potential audience
  - Provides a general reference
  - Includes geoscience and engineering aspects

Discussion of Engineering Tools

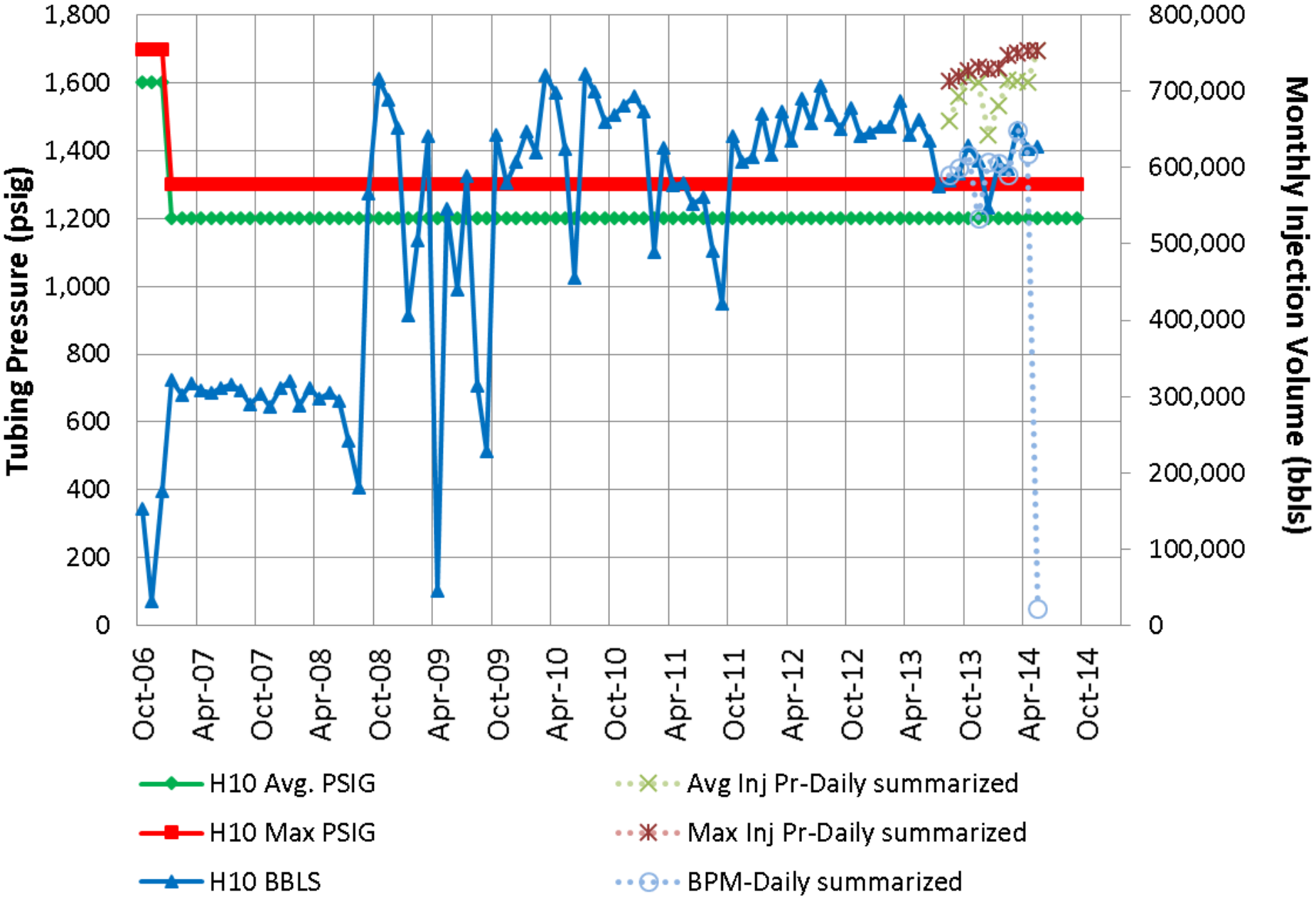
- A few points.
  - Quality of data is crucial.
  - These methods are an interpretive tool, not a fix-all.
  - Pressure buildup can be transmitted over great distances:
    - Multiple disposal wells in same formation and geographic area;
    - Individual wells in fracture flow dominated injection formations.
  - PE tools can determine if fracture flow is predominant.
  - PE tools can detect reservoir changes at distance, including faults.
  - Correspondence between well behavior and seismicity was apparent in some case example wells.

Discussion of Engineering Tools

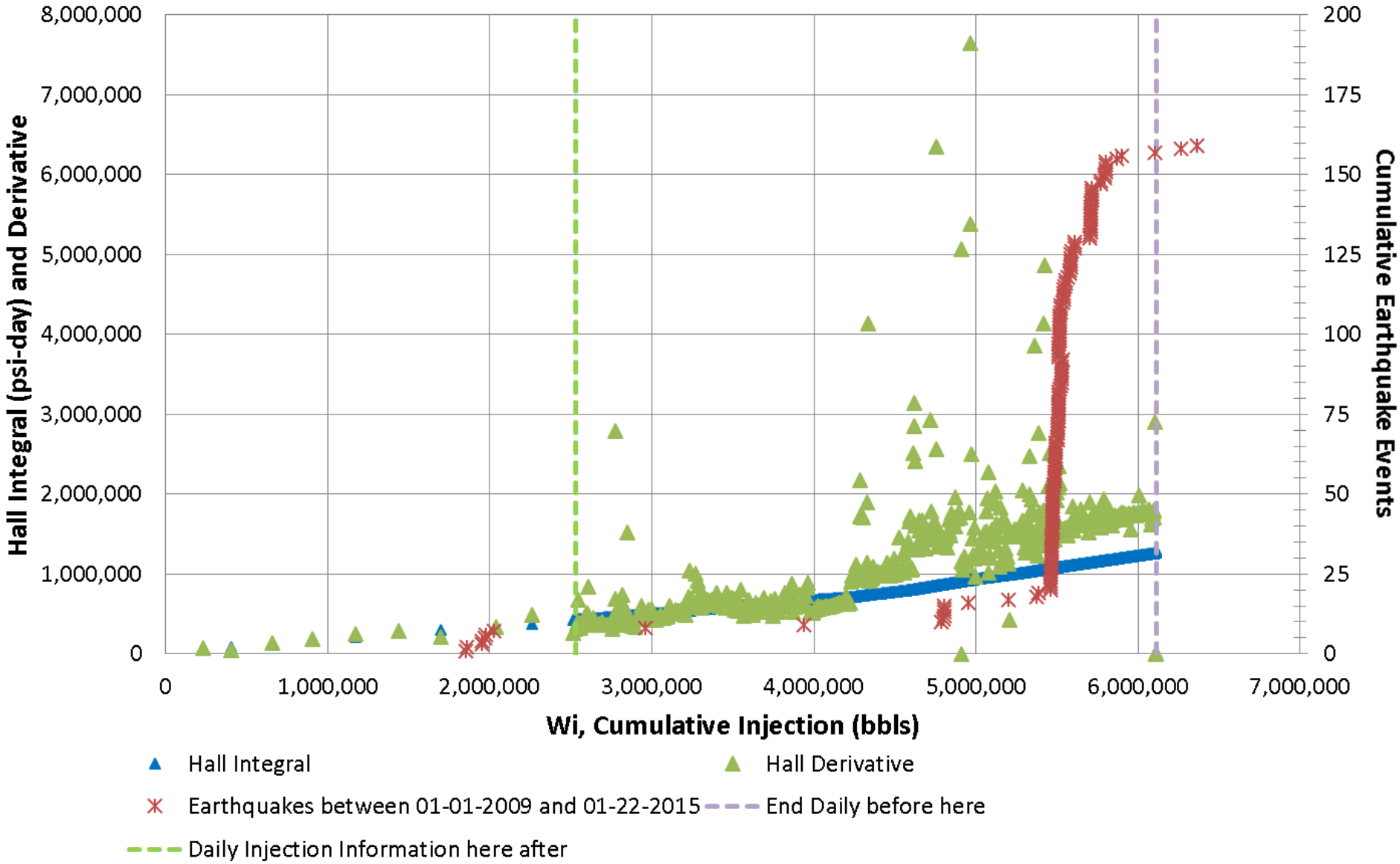
- Two fundamental approaches
  - Well testing
    - Pressure transient or falloff testing can determine if a reservoir is fractured, as well as static formation pressure.
    - Function of near well conditions.
  - Analysis of operational data
    - Hall plots using operational data (rates and pressures) indicate changes in transmissivity (ease of injection) at distance.
    - Covers both near wellbore and distance increasing with time.

Discussion of Engineering Tools

- Examples – operational data



Constant disposal or tubing pressures are probably not measured data.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Hall Integral (psi-day) and Derivative
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175
150
125
100
75
50
25
0
Cumulative Earthquake Events
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2,000,000
3,000,000
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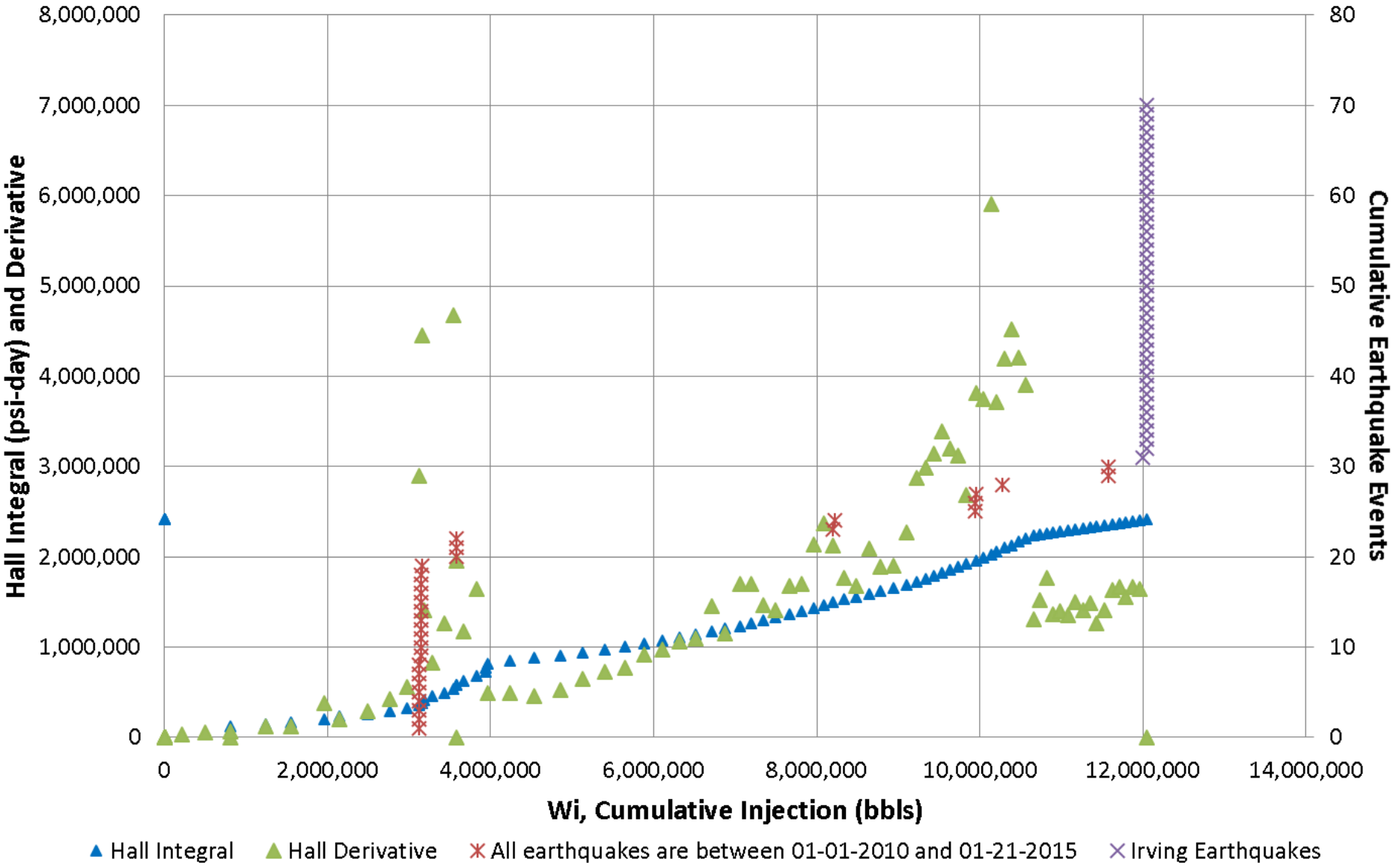
Wi, Cumulative Injection (bbls)
Hall Integral
Hall Derivative
Earthquakes between 01-01-2009 and 01-22-2015
End Daily before here
Daily Injection Information here after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Hall Integral (psi-day) and Derivative
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Cumulative Earthquake Events
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Wi, Cumulative Injection (bbls)
Hall Integral
Hall Derivative
All earthquakes are between 01-01-2010 and 01-21-2015
Irving Earthquakes

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

- Take a proactive approach.
  - Realistic analysis instead of definitive proof.
  - Monitor seismicity trends in regional area.
    - Magnitude and frequency
  - Engage operators early.
    - Additional site geologic data
    - Voluntary actions
    - Increased operational data
  - Engage external expertise if warranted.
  - Modify operations if warranted.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

- Perform multi-disciplinary characterization of site (injection reservoir testing, analysis, consultation, literature).
- Case examples – deep fractured reservoirs.
  - Fractures more likely to communicate pressure buildup long distances.
  - Buildup can be directional and extend miles.
  - Fractured reservoirs can result in communication with basement rocks, lower confining strata is important.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

- Assure high quality operational data.
- Permitting contingencies (traffic light approach) are an excellent tool to address site uncertainties.
- Increased seismometers better define seismic activity.

Final Words

- http://www.epa.gov/region5/water/uic/ntwg/pdfs/induced-seismicity-201502.pdf
- EPA Region 6 is preparing a seismicity training module for injection well regulators.
- We have a summary poster set up.

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Purpose

Provides the UIC Director with tools for minimizing and managing induced seismicity on a site-specific basis, using available Director discretionary authority.

The authority used to address potential USDW risks from seismic events could include:

- Loss of disposal well mechanical integrity;
- Impact to various types of existing wells;
- Changes in USDW water level or turbidity;
- USDW contamination resulting from fluid movement through faults, wellbore damage, or earthquake-damaged surface sources.

National Technical Workgroup Tasks

1. Compare parameters identified as most applicable to induced seismicity with the technical parameters collected under current regulations.
2. Prepare a decision model.
3. Assess applicability of pressure transient testing and/or pressure monitoring techniques.
4. Summarize lessons learned from case studies.
5. Recommend measurements or monitoring techniques for higher risk areas.
6. Analyze applicability of conclusions to other well classes.
7. Recommend specific areas for further research needed.

Critical Components

Pressure buildup

- An increase in the formation pore pressure from disposal activities.

Faults of Concern

- Optimally oriented for movement, and under critical stress.
- Sufficient size for movement to potentially cause a significant earthquake.
- May be a single fault or a zone of multiple faults and fractures.

Pathway

- A permeable avenue (matrix or fracture permeability) allowing the pore pressure increase to reach the fault.

Decision Thought Process

Existing Class II — New Class II

UIC Process ← Seismicity Concerns?

↓

Site Assessment
(Fault, Pressure Buildup, Pathway)

↓

UIC Process ← Remaining Seismicity Concerns?

↓

Approaches
(Monitoring, Operational, Management)

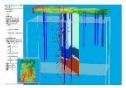
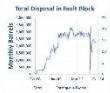
↓

Is There A Satisfactory Approach? → No Permit

↓

UIC Process With Conditions

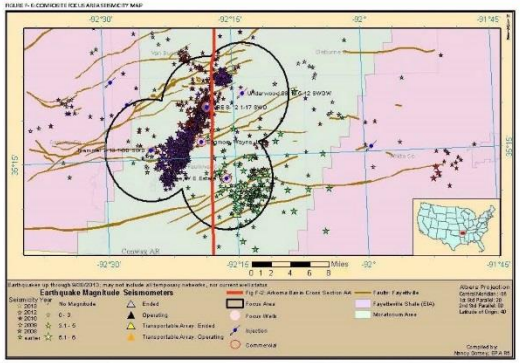
Work Flow and Action Plan

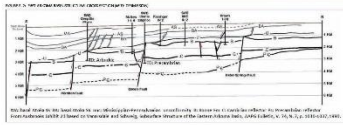
Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
			
Collect necessary data	GIS Mapping and Analysis	Can the potential be mitigated?	Act in a timely fashion

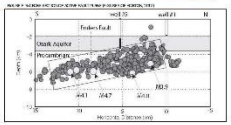
Multi-Disciplinary Site Assessment

Information Needed	Source
Regional and Local Seismicity	USGS or state agency catalog; event accuracy, seismometer spacing
Detailed Well Information	Permit and other well files, including daily disposal volumes and pressures
Geologic Setting	Maps, cross-sections, permit application, seismic surveys, publications
Reservoir Characterization	Core analysis, well tests, well logs, hydraulic fracture results, publications
Reservoir Pressure	Static pressure: gauge or fluid level
Flow Character	Analysis or modeling
Pathway	Analysis or test results
Stress Direction	Borehole breakout, production logs

Site Example



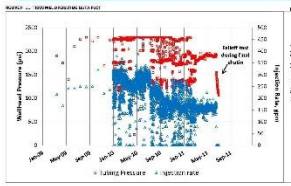


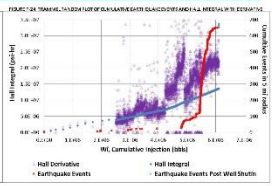


The Director acquired additional site information, requested action from operators, and prohibited disposal operations. Specific examples include:

- Increased monitoring and reporting requirements for disposal well operators to provide additional operational data for reservoir analysis.
- Required one well to install a seismic monitoring array prior to disposal as an initial permit condition.
- Required plugging or temporary shutin of suspect disposal wells linked to injection-induced seismicity while investigating or interpreting additional data.
- Defined a moratorium area prohibiting Class II disposal wells within a defined high risk area of seismic activity.

Petroleum Engineering Analysis





Report Conclusions

- Be proactive rather than requiring definitive proof.
- Utilize multi-disciplinary approaches.
- Understand that pressure can be transmitted miles through fractures.
- Apply established engineering tools using high quality data.