

LEGISFRACKING

Injecting enormous amounts of private money into public policy making, creating a fracture between elected lawmakers and the people they represent, in order to retrieve legislation that favors the bottom line for special interests rather than the best long-term outcomes for citizens and the environment.

SOURCE

Hydrofracking, the process of fracturing reservoir rock formations by forcing fluid through a wellbore drill, in order to increase the rate and ultimate recovery of oil and natural gas.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HYDROFRACKING

Oil and gas aren't the only things coming out of hydrofracking sites. Arsenic, copper, vanadium, and adamanatanes contaminate ground water, decrease air quality, and cause cancer, kidney failure, anaemia, and fertility problems.

Invented by Halliburton in the 1940s, hydrofracking injects a mixture of water, sand, and chemicals—some of them toxic—into underground rock formations to blast them open and release natural gas.

Much of the debate about hydrofracking is focused on the Marcellus Shale, a layer of shale rock between 4,000 and 8,000 feet underneath Pennsylvania, New York, West Virginia, and Ohio. The Marcellus Shale contains the largest natural gas deposit in North America and the second-largest in the world. Most experts agree that the Marcellus Shale contains 250-500 trillion cubic feet of extractable natural gas, an amount that could serve domestic needs for more than 10 years at current levels of United States demand. The vast Marcellus Shale natural gas reserves are worth at least \$2 trillion to industry and billions in potential tax revenues to states.

WHAT THEY DON'T WANT YOU TO KNOW ABOUT HYDROFRACKING

Policy decisions about when and where to permit hydrofracking aren't necessarily being made in the best interests of the public. Industry groups and landowners cite job creation and the need for new energy sources in their lobbying, but environmental groups urge caution, pointing to potential risks to water, air, and natural resources. Whatever the ultimate policy decisions are, they should not be unduly influenced by large infusions of natural gas industry dollars.



THE HALLIBURTON LOOPHOLE

In 2010, Michigan leased hydrofracking rights on state land for \$186 million, even though such drilling operations are generally exempt from provisions of the Safe Water Drinking Act and the state is surrounded by the Great Lakes, which hold 21 percent of the world's surface fresh water. This exemption is called the Halliburton Loophole. Among the many dubious provisions in the 2005 energy bill, the Halliburton Loophole was inserted at the behest of then-Vice President Dick Cheney, a former chief executive of Halliburton. It stripped the Environmental Protection Agency of its authority to regulate hydraulic fracturing.

HOW MUCH IS YOUR HEALTH AND OUR ENVIRONMENT WORTH?

In New York, a powerful coalition of businesses spent \$2,869,907 in 2010 lobbying against a moratorium on hydrofracking, more than four times the amount spent by groups supporting the moratorium.

And in order to prevent the Pennsylvania legislature from creating reasonable taxation measures and necessary safety rules, the drilling industry has made more than \$3 million in political contributions to Pennsylvania lawmakers since 2001. It has spent an additional \$5 million on lobbying in Harrisburg in just the last three years.

When asked to put in place a temporary moratorium on drilling in public lands until a full study of the impact could be made, legislators who voted "no" had accepted an average of three times as much cash from gas interests as those who supported the reasonable measure.

REGULATION, NOT OPEN SEASON TO THE HIGHEST BIDDERS

Disparities in spending on hydrofracking lobbying reflect the massive resources at the disposal of the natural gas industry and underscores the need for citizens to counter special interest money with grassroots education and outreach.

The industry argues that the chemicals used in hydrofracking are proprietary secrets and that disclosing them would hurt their competitiveness. It also argues that the process is basically safe and that regulating it would deter domestic production.

If hydraulic fracturing is as safe as the industry says it is, why should it fear regulation?

HOW IT'S DONE

- Four to five acres of land are cleared of trees and graded flat.
- A well is drilled 8-10,000 feet deep. The drill bit is turned into the shale layer at a 90 degree angle and continued horizontally for up to a mile. The shale is fractured every 1,000 feet of the pipe.
- One to five million gallons of water are needed for each fracturing event, along with 5-25,000 gallons of chemicals that drilling companies won't disclose. This toxic mix is pumped through holes in the pipes at pressures of 6,000 psi (pounds per square inch).
- Underground pressure forces 40-70 percent of the fracking mixture or flowback fluid back up the pipe. This flowback fluid picks up naturally-occurring compounds from the shale such as dissolved hydrocarbons, benzene, ethylene, ethyl benzene, xylene, heavy metals, and radioactive material such as radium 226.
- Flowback fluid is then stored in holding tanks or more often open tarp-lined pits where it is allowed to evaporate. It is later trucked to injection wells or landfills for disposal.
- Natural gas later rises through the pipes to compressor stations for purification. Volatile organic compounds and other dangerous chemicals are burned off or vented directly into the air during this on-site process.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Even if no accidents occur, this process of extraction leaves a huge carbon footprint, larger than oil production and at least as large as coal mining. Trees are cleared for the wellheads. Roads are built through forested areas. Thousands of truck trips are necessary to frack a single well. Rapid withdrawal of millions of gallons of water depletes groundwater, affecting lakes and streams. And the drilling equipment and wells affect air quality.

A study in the Fort Worth, Texas, area showed emissions from natural gas processing match total emissions from cars and trucks, leading to alarming levels of carbon monoxide, methane, and other volatile organic compounds and particulate matter in the air.

A new study from Cornell University estimates that in the long-term, fracking will actually produce more greenhouse gases than burning coal.

Source: Friends of the Jordan River Watershed, Inc.

COMMON CAUSE'S ROLE

Common Cause is concerned that the flood of industry money into policymaking can result in legislative decisions that benefit corporations rather than citizens. In addition, Americans deserve more information about the environmental impact of hydrofracking.

Common Cause Pennsylvania launched www.MarcellusMoney.org, a website dedicated to tracking money that gas drillers have paid to influence Pennsylvania's elected officials. Read the report, "Deep Drilling, Deep Pockets—The Campaign Contributions & Lobbying Expenditures of the Natural Gas Industry in Pennsylvania" at www.commoncause.org/hydrofrackingPA.

Common Cause New York continues to expand its analysis of lobbying expenditures by those who seek to influence critical hydrofracking policy decisions. Read the report, "Deep Drilling, Deep Pockets—Lobbying Expenditures of the Natural Gas Industry to Influence Public Policy, Part II" at www.commoncause.org/hydrofrackingNY.

THE DAMAGE SO FAR

Severe environmental damage, drinking water contamination and human health problems linked to fracking are too numerous to list. Wyoming, Colorado, West Virginia, Texas, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, Texas, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and New York all have seen cases of poisoned aquifers and rivers resulting in fish and wildlife die-offs, and clusters of unusual health problems such as chronic dizziness, headaches, neurological problems, and rare tumors. Bad tasting, polluted drinking water that actually catches on fire when lit with a match has made the news in several states.

- Colorado: 206 chemical spills were linked to 48 cases of water contamination in 2008 alone.
- New Mexico: Toxic fluids seeped into water supplies at more than 800 drilling sites in 2008.
- Wyoming has numerous reports of high ozone levels from fracking leading to respiratory problems.
- Dish, Texas: A health survey funded by town residents revealed dangerously high levels of benzene, toluene, and xylene in the air.
- Injection wells used to dispose of wastewater and fracking fluid along the Texas Barnett Shale were recently linked to a series of minor earthquakes.
- Clearville, Pennsylvania: Livestock dropped dead after suffering motor skill breakdowns, likely resulting from high arsenic levels in the soil due to flowback fluid leaks.
- Avella, Pennsylvania: A flowback wastewater impoundment exploded, producing 200-foot flames and burning for 6 hours.
- Dimock, Pennsylvania: New Years Day 2009, a well exploded from leaked gasses due to improper cementing of the well casing, according to the PA Department of Environmental Protection. A similar explosion in Ohio blew a house off its foundations and left a neighborhood with no drinkable water.
- Dimock, Pennsylvania: In September 2009, more than 8,000 gallons of fracking fluid leaked from faulty supply pipes into wetlands, poisoning streams and killing fish. Drinking water turned brown and corrosive, and would ignite when a match was held to it as it came out the tap. People reported dizziness, headaches and skin sores from showering.
- Clearfield County, Pennsylvania: June 2010, a gas well blew out releasing more than one million gallons of gas and drilling fluid before being contained nearly 16 hours later.

Source: Friends of the Jordan River Watershed, Inc.

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