

Ban Fracking Now!

Fact Sheet • October 2013

Fracking takes a huge toll on affected communities, generates massive volumes of toxic waste, creates hazardous air pollution problems, poses long-term risks to vital drinking water resources and threatens to lock in catastrophic changes to our climate. We need to ban fracking now.

The term “fracking” is shorthand for hydraulic fracturing. After drilling down to a rock formation that holds oil or natural gas, and then drilling sideways through this targeted layer of rock, operators inject, under extreme pressure, millions of gallons of water mixed with sand and chemicals to fracture (or “frack”) the rock.¹ Without these fractures, oil or natural gas would remain tightly held in the rock, unable to flow up the well.²

In the public debate over the future of the U.S. energy system, fracking has come to mean much more than just the specific process of high-volume hydraulic fracturing of long horizontal wells to extract shale gas, tight gas and tight oil. To the public, fracking represents all that the specific process of hydraulic fracturing entails: marred landscapes and fragmented forests; roads crowded with heavy-duty trucks carrying water; chemicals and toxic waste; earthquakes related to disposal of this waste, and a legacy of air pollution, water pollution, climate pollution and public health problems.

Fracking and other unconventional methods of extracting oil and gas threaten to prolong our destructive dependence on fossil fuels. We can, instead, meet our energy needs with clean, renewable and abundant resources.³ But without a ban on fracking, the oil and gas industry will continue to stand in the way.

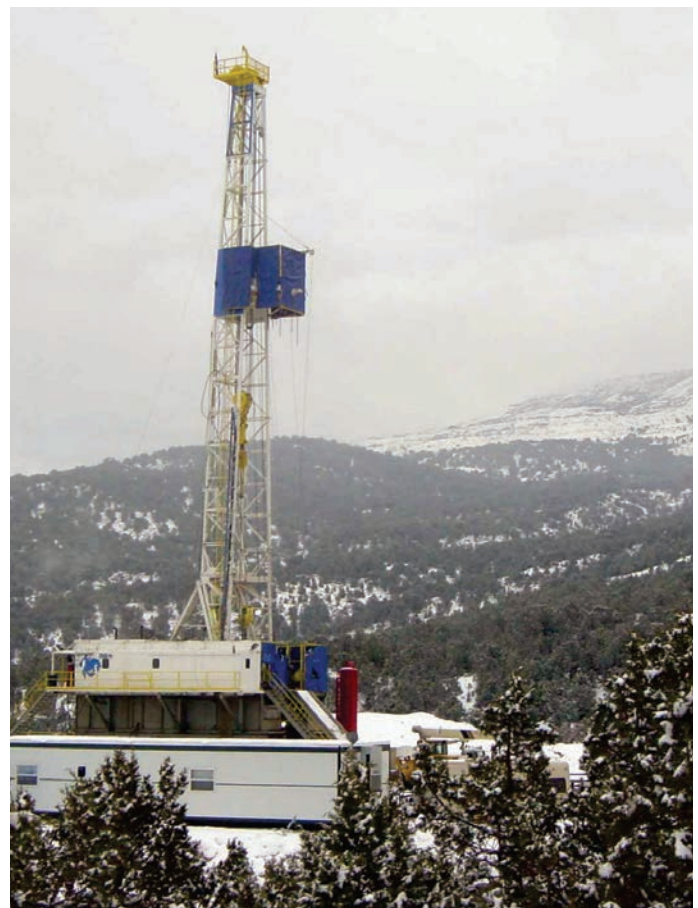


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Fracking brings economic costs to local communities — hidden in plain sight

While Big Oil and Big Gas enjoy huge profits, padded by billions of dollars a year in taxpayer-funded subsidies,⁴ communities across the country pay the price:

- **Rents are rising** with the influx of transient oil and gas industry workers, pushing out local residents of affected communities⁵;
- **Agricultural lands are being lost**, either taken out of production to make room for oil and gas wells, pipelines and other infrastructure,⁶ or contaminated — either directly or via groundwater — in the aftermath of inevitable explosions, leaks and spills⁷;
- **Tourism and agricultural brands are under threat** as drilling and fracking operations mar scenic landscapes, fragment forests and leave a legacy of pollution that especially undercuts organic farms, wineries and breweries⁸;
- **Heavy-duty trucks hauling toxic wastes are clogging and damaging roads** at the public's expense, adding to the nonstop noise and light pollution from drilling and fracking rigs and leading to accidents⁹;
- **Homeowners are seeing their property values decline**, getting shortchanged on royalties and having difficulty selling their homes since banks are refusing to offer mortgages when drilling and fracking are close by¹⁰;

- **Workers are being poisoned, injured and even killed** from accidents and harmful exposures to toxins¹¹; and
- **Crime and other demands on social services are on the rise** in affected communities, with emergency services and schools stretched thin.¹²

Fracking prolongs our dependence on dirty and dangerous energy resources

Drilling and fracking amount to a large, uncontrolled public health experiment. The oil and gas industry is:

- **Producing massive volumes of toxic and even radioactive waste**, the disposal of which is causing earthquakes and risking drinking water resources¹³;
- **Causing thousands of accidents, leaks and spills** each year that threaten rivers, streams and shallow aquifers¹⁴;
- **Pumping hazardous pollutants into the air**, at the expense of local communities, families and farms¹⁵;
- **Turning homes into explosive hazards** by contaminating water wells with methane and other harmful gases¹⁶;
- **Consuming millions of gallons of water for each fracked well**, and competing with farmers for local water supplies¹⁷;



MARCELLUS SHALE FRACKING OPERATION SITE / PHOTO COURTESY OF U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

- **Putting vital aquifers at risk for generations**, because scientists simply do not know how drilling and fracking hundreds to thousands of new wells in a region will ultimately change the way contaminants — not just the cancer-causing fracking chemicals but also hydrocarbon gases and even radioactive brines — mix and move deep underground, over long periods of time¹⁸;
- **Changing the climate on which we all depend**, by emitting carbon dioxide from burning natural gas and petroleum products, leaking the potent greenhouse gas methane from drilling and fracking operations and related infrastructure, and locking in future emissions with sunk costs in infrastructure¹⁹; and
- **Spending millions on lobbying and deceptive public relations campaigns**, delaying the remaking of the U.S. energy system around energy conservation, energy efficiency and renewables necessary to ensure a livable planet for our children and grandchildren.²⁰

Take action

Meeting our energy needs with clean, renewable and abundant resources is the only responsible path forward. It is the only way to deliver long-term energy security and energy independence at the national, state and local levels.²¹ It is the path that leads to broad-based economic prosperity and that spares us from the huge but hidden costs that come with our dependence on fossil fuels.²² But advocates of fracking and

other unconventional methods for extracting fossil fuels stand in the way, protecting their enormous profits at all of our expense.²³

Join the movement to Ban Fracking Now and help keep dirty fuels safely underground!



Endnotes

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