

## Hydraulic Fracturing (Fracking)

### **The Challenge:**

Hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, a drilling technique used to increase the rate at which natural gas can be extracted from deep subterranean reservoirs, is expanding rapidly in the U.S. The process involves pumping millions of gallons of water, sand, and chemicals into rock to break it apart so that natural gas can be released into existing wells. The methods and chemicals used in fracking vary depending on the geological characteristics of the area.

These extraction techniques give us access to vast reserves of natural gas at a time when our nation is turning to cleaner burning energy alternatives and a lessened dependence on oil.

The process, however, has been linked to aquifer and surface water contamination, as well as air pollution from smog-forming pollutants. People and animals living close to natural gas drilling sites in various states have experienced serious health issues, but lack the ability to trace their illnesses back to the fracking process due to current regulations.

Oil and gas facilities are exempt from reporting emissions, and what's more disturbing is that they are not required to publicly report chemicals used in the process. This is precisely why humans and animals that are experiencing similar health issues near drilling sites cannot definitively link illnesses to the fracking process. Water contamination cannot be linked to the process without full disclosure of chemicals used by the industry. Also, many of the contaminants are naturally occurring deep within the earth, but pose harm when brought to the surface in flowback water from the fracturing process.

A draft study from the EPA has linked the fracking process to water contamination in Wyoming<sup>1</sup>. A consistent pattern of water contamination has been reported at over 1,000 drilling sites where the process is being used. Water treatment plants are not designed to remove some of the contaminants from the flowback water.

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<sup>1</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency, "December 2011 DRAFT Investigation of Groundwater Contamination near Pavillion, Wyoming." [http://www.epa.gov/region8/superfund/wy/pavillion/EPA\\_ReportOnPavillion\\_Dec-8-2011.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/region8/superfund/wy/pavillion/EPA_ReportOnPavillion_Dec-8-2011.pdf). Retrieved Feb. 2011.

Fugitive methane emissions, as well as other volatile organic compounds, from shale gas extraction methods can contribute significantly to climate change as well as local air pollution. The American Petroleum Institute, a trade association and lobbyist for the industry, has played a major role in the development of standards for the fracking process, which are clearly inadequate.

### **The Record of the Democratic and Republican Parties:**

During the Bush-Cheney Administration, Congress granted hydraulic fracturing an exemption from the Safe Drinking Water Act. States with dwindling budgets have been left to manage growing contamination issues.

President Obama, in his State of the Union address, called for an increase in natural gas drilling. He stated that he would require companies that drill on public land to report chemicals that they use, but that isn't enough to protect the public health and the environment.

### **Rocky Anderson's Approach Toward Solutions:**

Rocky Anderson understands that we do not need to sacrifice the environment to satisfy our short-term energy needs. As President he will promote sustainable energy practices that satisfy our energy requirements and incorporate environmental and public health protections – particularly in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change and protecting water resources. He will:

- Ensure regulation of the hydraulic fracturing process so that it will be safely implemented – or, if it cannot be safely implemented, he will, to the extent of his authority, place or advocate a moratorium or a ban on the process.
- Make companies liable for health problems and environmental impacts resulting from the fracking process.
- Require companies to scrub air emissions and capture and utilize methane gases, just as he did while Mayor of Salt Lake City at the city's wastewater treatment facility.
- Require clean wastewater disposal through water purification systems that scrub out hydrocarbons, toxic organic compounds,

heavy metals, oil and gas, and naturally occurring radioactive compounds.

- Require companies to publicly disclose chemicals used in the hydraulic fracturing process.
- Require a full investigation from the EPA into fracking procedures and disclose the findings to the public.
- Advocate reversing the exemption of fracking from the Safe Drinking Water Act.
- Support the expansion of renewable and clean energy sources so that fossil fuel energy sources can be phased out.