

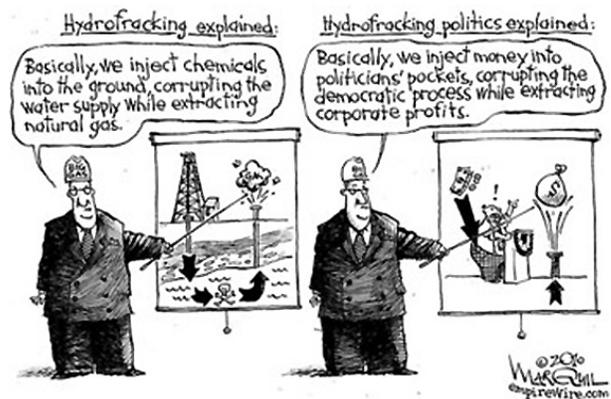
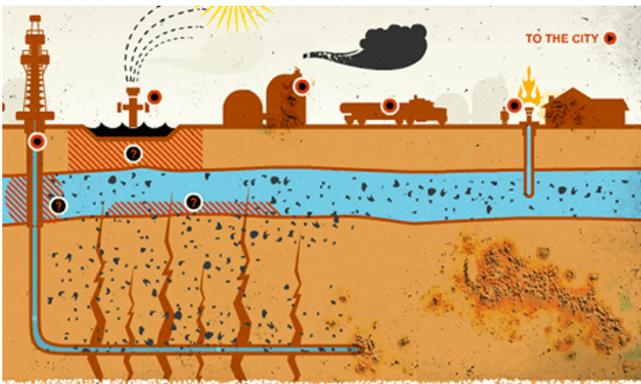
What Is fracking?

(Source: Oil and Gas Accountability Project)

Geologic formations may contain large quantities of oil or gas, but have a poor flow rate due to low permeability. This is particularly true for shale deposits.

Hydraulic fracturing (aka “fracking”) stimulates wells drilled into these formations, making profitable otherwise prohibitively expensive extraction. Within the past decade, the combination of fracking with horizontal drilling has opened up shale deposits across the country and brought large-scale natural gas drilling to new regions.

Typically, fracking involves high-pressure injection of fluids and sand to fracture rock formations, thereby enabling more oil or gas to flow to the well. After fracturing, some of the fluids remain stranded underground. These fluids may include hazardous chemicals such as formaldehyde, ethylene glycol, methanol, benzene, and others.



Fracking is far from benign!

Here some of the issues and impacts related to this technique:

Water use: The EPA estimates that up to 140 billion gallons of water are used annually to fracture 35,000 wells in the US. The extraction of so much water for fracking has raised concerns about the ecological impacts to aquatic resources as well as the depletion of drinking water aquifers.

Toxic Chemicals: In addition to large volumes of water, a variety of chemicals are used in fracking fluids. Many fracking fluid chemicals are known to be toxic to humans and wildlife, and several are known to cause cancer (e.g. formaldehyde, ethylene glycol, methanol, benzene)

Health Concerns: Exposure to fracking chemicals can occur by ingesting chemicals that have entered drinking water, through direct skin contact, or by breathing in vapors from wastes stored in pits or tanks. For example, according to the EPA chronic inhalation or exposure to methanol may result in headache, dizziness, blurred vision, and even blindness in humans.

Groundwater Contamination: According to studies by the EPA, the oil and gas industry, and interviews with regulators, anywhere from 20 to 85% of fracking fluids remain in the formation, resembling a source of groundwater contamination for many generations to come.

Common Myths About Fracking

Myth: Fracking fluids and products pose no real risk to our water supplies or public health.

FACT: Fracking fluids contain toxic chemicals and are being injected into and near drinking water supplies. According to the EPA, chemicals in fracturing fluids have known negative health effects such as respiratory, neurological, reproductive impacts, impacts on the central nervous system, and cancer.

Myth: There are no documented cases of fracturing fluids migrating into or impacting drinking water wells.

FACT: Complaints have been documented in Alabama, Colorado, New Mexico, Ohio, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia and Wyoming in which residents have reported changes in water quality or quantity following fracturing operations of gas wells near their homes.

Myth: The EPA released a scientific study that demonstrated that hydraulic fracturing is safe and should not be regulated.

FACT: The conclusion of the 2004 EPA report was politically influenced and the result of pressure by special interest groups and the 2001 Special Energy Task Force, chaired by former Halliburton CEO Dick Cheney. The 2004 EPA report's conclusion was subsequently reviewed and found to be "scientifically unsound". Instead a careful scientific analysis established that:

- 1) fracking occurs within underground sources of drinking water
- 2) fracking fluids contain toxic components that are not entirely removed from drinking water formations
- 3) fracking can create pathways which allow methane to migrate to groundwater.

Myth: Non-toxic and less toxic fracturing alternatives are in their infancy and not available for industry use.

FACT: Oil and gas operators are routinely using less toxic fracturing fluids in off-shore environments in order to meet federal requirements under the Clean Water Act. Thus, the development of non-toxic or green fracturing fluids is not in its infancy.

Myth: Our drinking water is not at risk from hydraulic fracturing because industry is fracturing at depths below the aquifers from which our communities are locating water wells.

FACT: When drilling companies are developing deeper oil or gas resources, there are a number of issues and concerns. Fracking can leave fluids stranded at these depths, and, through the high pressures used, can open up pathways for fluids or gases from other geologic layers to flow where they are not intended.

Myth: Lifting the exemption for hydraulic fracturing under the Safe Drinking Water Act would be unduly burdensome for States.

FACT: Congressional Representatives DeGette (CO), Salazar (CO) and Hinchey (NY) introduced a bill in 2008 that would reverse special treatment of Halliburton and other hydraulic fracturing companies by requiring regulation of hydraulic fracturing under the Safe Drinking Water Act (HR 7231). According to the EPA, the regulation of underground injection does not require a new permitting process. States already have permitting processes for oil and gas wells and they could simply include fracking.

Myth: The practice of fracking and creating underground fractures is well-tested, controllable and safe.

FACT: Fracking fluids not only contain toxic chemicals, but this operation utilizes high volumes of fluids and high pressures to open up underground pathways for gas or oil to flow. Injected fluids have been known to travel as far as 3,000 feet from a well. While the industry claims that fracturing is a well-tested and controllable technology, computer models have shown that fractures can behave differently than predicted.

Wiregrass Activists for Clean Energy (WACE) is a chapter of The Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL).

You can learn more about our organization at: www.wiregrass-ace.org