



Resolutions To Action

LCWR Global Concerns Committee

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The Costs of Hydrofracking

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How could you allow the earth to be destroyed for some money? And you told me that it did not really matter because at the end of time, according to your faith, Jesus Christ would return and make the world whole again for his faithful, and those people who did the damage to the world would receive their just due. But don't you see that 'those people' are you? 'Those people' are all of us if we allow the destruction of our earth. -Stephen Cleg-horne (May 18, 2012)

EXPERIENCE

Stephen Cleghorn's wife, Lucinda Hart-Gonzalez, died in November of a cancer that overwhelmed her in just months. In his press release, Cleghorn wrote: "Today I act to declare my farm, all that lives above its surface, the very air and sunlight that caresses and enlivens all of us here today, and all that lies below it as firmament, all of this I hereby declare off-limits from shale gas extraction and its toxic impacts, in perpetuity." He then scattered a portion of Hart-Gonzalez's ashes on a special high place above their land in Reynolds-ville, Pennsylvania.

"May she come now in these ashes to declare this farm forever inviolate of shale gas drilling or any other attack upon it as a living system," he continued. "Here now she declares a new right of love on the surface and below this farm that no gas drill will ever penetrate. Come, be with us now."¹

SOCIAL ANALYSIS

Only recently have two relatively new processes been combined to break up that shale and allow the natural gas to escape. These processes are the amazing ability to turn a drill bit in any direction and hydraulic fracturing, also known as hydrofracking. Hydrofracking is the process energy brokers have begun using to get at hard to reach natural gas located in shale formations deep within the earth. Shale formations are not pockets but rather continuous

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planes under everything. Think of it being like a concrete floor. To break it up with thousands of feet of soil over it, one needs lots of borings which means a high density of wells on the surface.

If shale gas is under your state or nation, city, mountain, or lake, it is technically possible, with enough capital investment, to reach it and fracture it. It is already possible to reach natural gas reserves that underlie much of the states of Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York (the Marcellus Shale).

After drilling vertically to a depth that reaches slightly above the shale, the drillbit is turned horizontally and

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pushed into the shale, as much as a mile or more. Small fractures are created in the targeted area with underground explosions and a mixture of sand, water, and chemicals is injected at high pressure into the newly created fractures to further crack the rock and release the gas.

The environmental and health impacts of fracking are shocking and well-documented, with numerous spills, blowouts, leaking wells, the release of contaminants, and other accidents.²

Fracking decimates water supplies. Hydrofracturing requires the use of 4 to 7

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million gallons of water for each “frack” and a single well could be fracked multiple times. If an average family of four in Ohio uses about 300 gallons of water per day, the water used in ONE “frack” would supply 52 four-person households with water for an entire year. The withdrawal of such large amounts of water from local reserves can significantly impact Ohio’s water resources and infringe upon constitutionally protected property rights for an untold number of landowners.

Fracking threatens air quality. Hazardous emissions are released from a variety of sources throughout the fracking process. These include hydrogen sulfide, volatile organic compounds, sulfur dioxide, BTEX (benzene, toluene,

ethyl benzene and xylene), as well as methane and natural gas. Known public health effects from these emissions include reproductive, respiratory, and blood disorders, as well as central nervous system and neurological effects.

REFLECTION

Most energy experts agree that we are past peak oil. We consume oil faster than we discover it. This confirms in the starkest terms that fossil fuel energy is finite. Collectively, we must determine how we will deal with that fact.

If we are not ready to wean ourselves of fossil fuels, then what are our options? Nuclear and coal are possibilities, but they each have their own set of problems. Natural gas is seen by the energy brokers of the world as an attractive alternative. Many in the energy business view natural gas as a transitional fuel, allowing continued dependence on fossil fuels yet reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

But hydrofracking technology requires astronomical amounts of water, a building block of life. When water is entombed in deep geological strata, a mile or more below the water table, it is permanently removed from the water cycle — as in forever. It will never again

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ascend into clouds, freeze into snowflakes, melt into rivulets, soak into soil, and rise through roots. It will never again be blood, tears, milk, sap, or nectar. It will never again swell a bud; quench a thirst, splash, drip, or glisten.

ACTION

1. Educate and empower yourself and others to assume responsible stewardship.
 - www.frack.mixplex.com/fracking
 - www.citizenscampaign.org/special_features/hydro-fracking-center.asp
 - www.nrdc.org/energy/gas-drilling
2. Reflect on “Fracking for gas puts life-giving water at risk” by Religious on Water (*National Catholic Reporter* 05/01/2012) ncronline.org/news/fracking-gas-puts-life-giving-water-risk
3. Join concerned people who encourage a ban on hydrofracking until the technology has been changed to make it safer. Call on Congress to pass the “Fracturing Responsibility and Awareness of Chemicals Act.” www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/112/hr1084

1 Sharon Abercrombie, “Pennsylvania farmer speaks out against fracking at memorial for wife” *National Catholic Reporter*, (May 18, 2012). Downloaded from ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/pennsylvania-farmer-speaks-out-against-fracking-memorial-wife.

2 Don Barber, Testimony to United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, “On hydraulic fracturing”, (May 3, 2011). Downloaded from www.docstoc.com/docs/129677129/Don-Barber-on-Hydraulic-Fracturing.

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