

FCSG endorsement of five year fracking moratorium and comments on the Fort Collins fracking ban

FCSG endorsement of a five year fracking moratorium initiative

The Fort Collins Sustainability Group (FCSG) endorses the effort by Citizens for a Healthy Fort Collins (CFAHFC) to place an initiative on the November 2013 ballot to establish a five year moratorium on the use of fracking (hydraulic fracturing) within the City of Fort Collins and on land under the City's jurisdiction. We believe that this move is necessary given City Council's vote on May 21st of this year to rescind its previous ban on fracking everywhere except from a few existing oil wells and pad sites. For more information on this City Council vote, see the comments posted below this endorsement.

A five year moratorium would allow time for studies to be conducted that would help determine the impact of fracking on public health and safety, water quality, air quality, the atmosphere, the landscape, and property values. The FCSG has grave concerns in particular about the impact of fracking on the atmosphere. For more information concerning this problem, see "FCSG statement on fracking and climate change" posted at <http://fcsг.fccan.org/sites/fcsg.fccan.org/files/Flyer%20on%20Fracking%20...>

Citizens for a Healthy Fort Collins is currently gathering signatures to place the fracking moratorium on the November ballot, and is soliciting funds to further this effort. We urge our supporters to volunteer and/or make a donation to CFAHFC by visiting www.healthyfoco.com.

Finally, we believe that regardless of the outcome of the moratorium initiative, residents of Fort Collins should consider adopting an ordinance or charter amendment that would establish the right of the community to a healthy environment, enshrined into law as a "Sustainability Bill of Rights." The Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (CELDF) has helped over 150 communities develop such laws, which have provided a statutory basis for banning fracking that has yet to be legally challenged, according to that organization. For more information on this approach, visit www.celdf.org.

FCSG comments on the Fort Collins fracking ban

On March 5th, 2013, the Fort Collins City Council voted to ban fracking (hydraulic fracturing) within city limits. The ban included an exception for existing wells or pad sites if the operator were able to negotiate an agreement with the City addressing health, safety, and environmental concerns associated with fracking.

On May 21st, City Council voted to approve an agreement with the sole operator in the City, Prospect Energy. That agreement permitted fracking not only at existing wells and pad sites, but also in a two square mile area known as the “undeveloped acreage.”, or UDA. The UDA is located adjacent to the Budweiser plant and the Hearthfire subdivision in northeast Fort Collins.

Prospect Energy had made clear to the City prior to May 21st that they would not accept the previous restriction limiting fracking to existing wells and pad sites. Fearing legal action by Prospect and the Colorado Oil and Gas Association, a majority on council including Mayor Karen Weitkunat, Gerry Horak, Gino Campana, and Wade Troxell voted to relax the fracking ban to include the UDA. The same four council members also voted to exempt Prospect Energy formally from a seven month moratorium on oil and gas development approved by City Council on December 18th, 2012.

The Fort Collins Sustainability Group regards the ban on fracking in Fort Collins as a dead letter. A majority on City Council has signaled that they will cave in to any threat of legal action by Prospect or any other company as long as some sort of operator agreement is put in place. Whether such an agreement would be legally enforceable in case the operator were to violate it is an open question.

On May 31st of this year, the group Citizens for a Healthy Fort Collins filed a notice with the City Clerk’s office to pass petitions to place a measure on the November ballot to impose a five year moratorium on fracking within Fort Collins city limits. The moratorium would include operations by Prospect Energy. According to Citizens for a Healthy Fort Collins, the moratorium would allow time for studies to be conducted that would help determine the impact of fracking on health, safety, and property values.

The Fort Collins Sustainability Group supports this proposed moratorium, and urges people to sign the petition to move it forward. For more information about the petition or to learn how to get involved in promoting it, call 970-430-6185, e-mail info@healthyfoco.org, or visit www.healthyfoco.com.