

A Fracking Moratorium is in Fort Collins' Best Interest

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The Fort Collins Sustainability Group (FCSG) believes that a five-year moratorium on fracking is in the best interest of the majority of Fort Collins residents. We therefore urge people to vote “Yes” on Issue 2A.

The FCSG originally supported the “ban” on fracking put in place by City Council on March 5th of this year. We reluctantly supported the exception included in that ordinance for existing wells or pad sites if the operator were able to negotiate a suitably stringent agreement with the City addressing the health, safety, and environmental concerns associated with fracking. Like many other organizations and individuals, we were appalled when the City later extended that exception to include any new well drilled by the operator of the existing wells in a two square mile area located in Northeast Fort Collins.

The five-year moratorium would apply to all oil and gas operations within the City as well as to land under the City’s jurisdiction, notably Soapstone Prairie and Meadow Springs Ranch. The existing “ban” does not apply to those two properties. The 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.

Oil and gas industry representatives often state that fracking has been around since the late 1940s, and is therefore a mature technology with well-understood impacts. The latter claim is simply false. Hydraulic fracturing has changed considerably since the late 1990s, when it started to be used widely to extract shale gas. The current process relies on much higher water pressures and volumes than were needed previously, and uses toxic chemicals at the operator’s discretion that are not subject to regulation by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). These chemicals are likely responsible for the damage to human and animal health documented by Headwaters Magazine (see <http://oberlinheadwaters.com/?p=251>).

In addition to allowing time for studies to be conducted on the current fracking process, a five-year moratorium would allow time for the State of Colorado and the Federal Government to put stronger regulations in place to protect the public from the impacts of fracking. Rolling back the exemption from EPA regulation that fracking currently enjoys would be a good place to start.

Oil and gas industry representatives often argue that placing limitations on fracking will increase the price of their products. However, cheap oil and natural gas is at best a mixed blessing. Cheap fossil fuel makes investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies less attractive, and thus negatively impacts those industries. And by delaying the adoption of energy

efficiency improvements and renewable energy sources, cheap fossil fuel makes it more difficult to address one of the overarching environmental problems of our time: global climate change.

According to a recent article in the Coloradoan, the oil and gas industry has outspent Citizens for a Healthy Fort Collins (HealthyFoCo), the grassroots organization that placed Issue 2A on the ballot, by a ratio of over 60 to one. Commercial interests should not be driving public policy at the expense of human health and the environment. Please join us in supporting a five year moratorium on fracking by visiting the HealthyFoCo website (www.healthyfoco.com) to find out how you can help, and by voting “Yes” on Issue 2A.

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