

Position Statement on a City-wide Ban on Fracking

The Fort Collins Sustainability Group has serious concerns about the impact of hydraulic fracturing (fracking) on the environment. We are particularly concerned about the impact of fracking on the atmosphere. Because of our concern about these impacts, we support a ban on fracking within Fort Collins city limits and on city-owned land.

According to data available from the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC), the following impacts of oil and gas extraction have been observed and recorded:

- Contamination of ground and surface water, including drinking water
- Negative impacts on vegetation, wildlife, and agriculture
- Negative impacts on human health
- Air quality degradation

See

<http://www.springsgov.com/units/boardscomm/OilGas/FEB%20IMPACTS%20CO%20SPRING%20FRACKING%202012%20S%20%20Davis.pdf> for a summary of these impacts.

The impact on air quality includes the emission of methane, the primary component of natural gas. Cornell researchers estimate that “as much as 8 percent of the methane in shale gas leaks into the air during the lifetime of a hydraulic shale gas well. That’s double the amount that escapes from conventional gas production. And, according to the study, the natural-gas industry already leads in methane pollution -- contributing 39 percent of the total amount of emissions.” See <http://kunc.org/post/cornell-study-hydraulic-fracturing-creates-more-greenhouse-gasses> for more detail.

The damage to the atmosphere from methane leakage and release from fracked wells is staggering. On a 100 year time horizon, methane is 21 times more powerful as a greenhouse gas than is carbon dioxide; on a 20 year time horizon, methane is 72 times more powerful as a greenhouse gas than is carbon dioxide. The Cornell researchers state that “the greenhouse gas footprint of shale gas approaches or exceeds coal ... when used to generate electricity.” (Climatic Change Journal, <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10584-011-0061-5>).

The Fort Collins Sustainability Group believes that it is important to heed the Cornell researchers’ warning concerning the use of fracking to release natural gas from shale: “We urge great caution in viewing natural gas as good fuel choice for the future, particularly as a transportation fuel where natural gas is no more efficient than diesel oil or gasoline.” In consideration of all the harmful impacts of fracking, the benefits simply do not outweigh the considerable risks. The Fort Collins Sustainability Group therefore urges City Council to place a measure banning hydraulic fracturing within city limits and on city-owned land on the April ballot.