Kyle - GEOGRAPHY

DEBATE

Is Fracking Our Energy Future?

Hydraulic fracturing (fracking, for short) is a new drilling technique that can extract hard-to-reach oil and gas

Midland, Texas: a drilling rig by a fracking pond, where waste water from fracking is stored

▶VOTE NOW! WWW.UPFRONTMAGAZINE.COM

JIM WILSON/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX

YES

America has vast reserves of natural gas that could power our homes and businesses well into the next century.

But much of that gas is trapped within layers of shale rock deep underground. Until recently, technology was not available to extract it cost-effectively. But advances in a technique called hydraulic fracturing have enabled energy companies to extract that gas (as well as hard-to-reach oil).

Hydraulic fracturing has revolutionized the way the U.S. thinks about its energy resources. The more natural gas we're able to drill in the U.S., the less energy we need to import. And since much of our imported oil and gas comes from unstable parts of the world, importing less makes the U.S. more secure.

The more natural gas we drill here, the less we have to import from unstable parts of the world.

The natural-gas boom created by hydraulic fracturing also means less pollution. Carbon emissions at U.S. power plants have declined to their lowest level in 20 years. That's largely because of the increasing use of natural gas, which burns cleaner than oil or coal. There's also been a 70 percent reduction in smog-creating pollutants like sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide.

Hydraulic fracturing has economic benefits too. It creates much-needed jobs, and by increasing the amount of natural gas available in the U.S., it has effectively lowered energy prices for many homeowners and businesses.

The natural-gas industry is committed to making sure hydraulic fracturing is conducted safely and responsibly to ensure that our environment is protected. For all these reasons, hydraulic fracturing will continue to play a key role in our energy future. •

—DANIEL WHITTEN
America's Natural Gas Alliance

NO

As oil and gas companies race to expand fracking operations across the nation, they're leaving a trail of polluted landscapes, devastated communities, reports of contaminated water, and plummeting property values.

Because fracking is exempt from the requirements of the federal Safe Drinking Water and Clean Air Acts, it does not have to adhere to the same environmental standards as other kinds of drilling operations.

States can implement their own, stricter standards for fracking but most haven't. For example, only 14 of the 29 states with fracking operations require companies to report which chemicals they use in fracking fluids.

Fracking pumps toxic fluids right into the ground and releases pollution into the air.

In the absence of strong safeguards, oil and gas companies are running roughshod over our communities. Fracking happens right next to our homes, schools, and farms. Operators pump toxic fluids right into the ground and release toxic pollution into the air.

Researchers from the Colorado School of Public Health tested the air near fracking sites and found a toxic stew of chemicals known to cause headaches, breathing problems, childhood leukemia, and other cancers. They concluded that people living within a half-mile of fracking sites were at greater risk for health problems, yet Colorado lets companies drill 150 feet from people's homes.

We don't have to sacrifice our health in order to keep the lights on when we have abundant wind and solar resources. Reckless oil and gas fracking without sufficient safeguards has no place in our energy future. •

—FRANCES BEINECKE
Natural Resources Defense Council