

Testimony at the EPA Hearing on Hydraulic Fracturing

Monday, September 13, 2010

Binghamton, New York

My name is Susan Multer. I speak on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Steuben County and the League of Women Voters of New York State.

We have a long history of concern about environmental issues including air and water quality. A 1997 position says LWVNY supports... "policies that... address the potential depletion or pollution of water supplies" and "stringent controls to protect...drinking water supplies including protection of watersheds."

Based on these positions we urge the EPA to widen its scope of study beyond the specific process of hydraulic fracturing to include the stages that occur before and after and which are necessary for the extraction of natural gas from shale.

1) TRANSPORT OF CHEMICALS risks leaks, spills and accidents which contaminate air, soil and surface water. Since those chemicals are not yet mixed with water, the concentration is much higher than during hydraulic fracturing and therefore even more dangerous. There have been "too many leaks, too many spills, too many instances of gas migrating to water supplies," said DEP Secretary John Hanger. "The industry on the whole needs to do a better job" (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, August 3, 2010).

2) DRILLING fluids include diesel fuel or petroleum distillates containing benzene which is carcinogenic. According to Schlumberger's website, sodium dichromate is also a drilling fluid, and it contains hexavalent chromium which is now contaminating water wells near Midland, Texas, where cancer incidence is high (Houston Chronicle, July 11, 2009). The Pennsylvania Land Trust Association in its 8-2-10 report identified 1,435 violations by drillers in 2.5 years, the vast majority of which affected or could have affected the environment.

3) HYDRAULIC FRACTURING adds toxic chemicals at the surface and disrupts radioactive materials and heavy metals deep in the earth. Dr. Anthony Ingraffea of Cornell University whose Ph.D. is in rock fracturing says anyone claiming that those chemicals or methane itself cannot migrate to aquifers "is not adhering to the laws of physics" (interview in film "All Fracked Up," July 31, 2010).

4) DISPOSAL OF TOXIC WASTE is not safe. Plastic liners of open pits can leak and cause contamination downstream as in the fish kill on Ron Gulla's farm in Hickory, Pennsylvania. Using old gas wells to inject toxic fluid is worse because even when cementing is done correctly, it can later crack (Dr. Ron Bishop, SUNY Oneonta, speaking at forum on "Gas Drilling in the Marcellus Shale and Its Effect on Our Water" in Bath, NY on June 30, 2009). Drill cuttings with radioactive material and heavy metals can contaminate landfills if the trucks don't first overturn and spill the load by a stream as happened in Steuben County two weeks ago (The Leader, August 31, 2010).

In conclusion, please include these four phases of gas extraction in your study. When reviewing data from industry and state regulators, do so critically. Then go to places like Bradford County, Pennsylvania; Bainbridge Township, Ohio; Rifle, Colorado and Fort Worth, Texas. Listen to the people who live there and give full consideration to what they say.

Thank you.

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