



EARTHWORKS

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The Siren Call of Dirty Drilling: economic development and its true price

Two stories in this drilling-focused edition of EARTHnotes highlight one of industry advocates' most compelling arguments for drilling willy nilly -- without adequate regulation & oversight, or waiting for the science to inform them -- jobs and economic development.

But, surprise surprise, it turns out both the jobs and development are ephemeral. The costs of drilling, on the other hand, are permanent.

One story covers the broader economic arguments. The other is an encouraging recounting of a meeting in Ohio where -- despite new Governor Kasich's gas drilling boosterism -- residents expressed their skepticism.

The takeaway: when considering the potential economic benefits of irresponsible drilling (which is what drilling on the quick is), consider whether it's worth risking your neighbor's [health](#), [property values](#), or [drinking water](#).

Because if we succumb to the drilling industry [sirens](#), our communities will meet a fate akin to those mythological Greek sailors...

Alan Septoff, EARTHWORKS

Chalk one up for Colorado's health and environment: gas industry drops lawsuit against drilling rules

The Colorado Oil and Gas Association agreed yesterday to drop its legal challenge to drilling rules adopted by the state two years ago. The rules were promulgated in response to public concern over the dangers posed by the unprecedented natural gas drilling boom.

As our Gwen Lachelt said, "This is a big victory for common sense. [Through the rulemaking process] Coloradans demanded responsible drilling that respects our right to clean water and protects our state's special places. [And] the state listened to the people, not the industry's overblown claims that the rules would drive drilling out of Colorado."

And now, by dropping its lawsuit, the industry has given up its attempt to overturn the will of the people of Colorado.

[\[Read the full post at EARTHblog.\]](#)

There oughta be a law against mining through a salmon stream

But, there isn't, at least, not yet.

That's why the wealthy Texans Dick Bass and William Herbert Hunt are proposing to develop a coal field that lies beneath the Chuit River, an extremely productive wild salmon watershed.

On January 20th, more than 150 people attended a hearing in remote Kenai, Alaska to tell the State of Alaska that the commercial and subsistence salmon harvest make the Chuit River an 'unsuitable land' for an open-pit coal mine.

You can weigh in too; the deadline for comments is February 19th.

[\[Learn more from EARTHWORKS Executive Director Jennifer Krill's post on EARTHblog.\]](#)

Trading pennies of cash for pounds of problems?

Say you decide to change your job, and figure that with a higher salary you'll be set. But a few years later, you're in financial hot water because you forgot to calculate the tripling of commuting costs and the car, clothing, and entertaining required by your new position.

Pretty shortsighted and irresponsible, right? But somehow when the gas industry uses the same method to peddle its wares, all too many policymakers plagued by budget woes are dazzled and eager to buy.

Take the widely touted 2010 study commissioned by the American Petroleum Institute that promises hundreds of thousands of jobs and billions in revenues in the Marcellus Shale region. Oops! It didn't even look at costs associated with gas development, like road and bridge repairs, declines in farming and tourism, or reduced property values and taxes. The same fuzzy math guided a recent report -- funded by the West Virginia Oil and Natural Gas Association -- that glowingly assessed jobs and money coming, and still to come, from gas drilling in that state.

[\[Find out more from EARTHWORKS' Marcellus Organizer Nadia Steinzor at EARTHblog.\]](#)

Gas industry attempts snow job in Ohio

Much of the time, a winter storm keeps people snug at home -- but apparently not in Ohio when gas development is at stake. Nearly 300 residents and elected officials in Canton (Stark County) turned out last week for a debate on the issue.

Industry representatives at the Canton meeting may have expected their enthusiasm for drilling to be so infectious that attendees wouldn't notice the smoke they were verbally blowing

Fortunately, some of the crowd wasn't buying it wholesale, but instead asked questions about gas development risks, rules, problems, and solutions. Maybe it helped that the debate was in a township considering a ban on gas drilling. Maybe the jobs-and-revenue picture was painted just a bit too brightly to seem true.

[\[Learn more about the community debate in Ohio about the pros and cons of drilling from EARTHWORKS' Marcellus Organizer Nadia Steinzor at EARTHblog.\]](#)

The New Mexico Roadrunner: keeping the drilling industry coyotes at bay

Not only is the Roadrunner the state bird, it's also a really cool critter. They're simultaneously striking and rambunctious (not unlike the legislative session at times). They'd rather run than fly - they've been clocked at speeds of 17 mph. And they catch and eat rattlesnakes. So we're naming our New Mexico messages in honor of the Roadrunner and in the spirit of keeping the drilling industry coyote at bay!

Our Gwen Lachelt has spent a considerable part of the past eight years running to the state capitol in Santa Fe to help develop safeguards to protect New Mexico's water, land, air and public health from oil and gas drilling and fracking.

Alas, the 2011 New Mexico Legislative Session began two weeks ago with threats from the new Governor to throw out these common sense protections we fought so long to develop -- like the Pit Rule.

Neither striking nor comical, we take this threat seriously and will do all we can to keep New Mexico's common sense drilling rules in place.

[\[Learn more from EARTHWORKS's Oil & Gas Accountability Project Director about our efforts to defend New Mexico's common sense](#)

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Recycle your cell phone from home



Cell phones contain toxic metals that can pollute the environment and threaten human health.

When recycled responsibly these metals can be put into circulation, decreasing the need for new metal mining.

[drilling regulations](#) over at [EARTHblog](#).]

State of the Union reaction: natural gas is not clean energy

We were heartened by the President's desire to end the massive subsidies we currently dole out to the oil industry and invest in renewable energy.

While we attempt to wean ourselves from all dirty energy sources, we need to end the subsidies, close the loopholes and institute policies that regulate fossil fuels in a way that best protects our communities and water resources.

Yet the clean energy section of the State of the Union speech mentioned several dirty energy sources. In the same breath as renewables like wind and solar, he also referred to so-called "clean" coal, nuclear power and yes, natural gas.

Increasing our dependency on one dirty fossil fuel to wean ourselves from another isn't a policy that moves us towards a real renewable energy future.

Convincing President Obama of this fact is one of our main challenges in the next two years.

[\[Read our Policy Director Lauren Pagel's complete reaction to the state of the union address at EARTHblog.\]](#)

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