



Earthworks' Hydraulic Fracturing Position Statement:

Put Communities First

Horizontal hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, has sparked an oil and gas drilling boom in the United States.

The prospect of unlocking domestic oil and gas from shale deposits has united multibillion dollar energy companies, their Congressional champions, and President Obama in enthusiastic support of increased fossil fuel development.

However, there are at least three significant problems with oil and gas development that put communities in the 34 oil and gas producing states at risk:

1. The science doesn't yet exist to determine if it's possible to extract oil and gas in a way that's safe for the environment and public health—especially with fracking, which is used to complete 90% of all oil and gas wells drilled.
2. Inadequate federal and state environmental regulation, coupled with insufficient enforcement resources, leaves us vulnerable to unsafe drilling and fracking.
3. There are alternatives to oil and gas; from electricity to heating to transportation, oil and gas are not our only choice, and may not be our best choice. We are risking our communities for oil and gas company profits, not to meet our energy needs.

Whether we are consumers of oil and gas, or live with oil and gas development, we are faced with two questions:

Under what circumstances, if any, should new oil and gas development occur, so as to ensure the protection of drinking water, public health, and the environment?

In places where drilling is already occurring, what steps must be taken to protect air, water and health of communities?

The answers to these questions are as simple as the questions are complex:

Decisions about oil and gas development must put communities first.

In practice, “putting communities first” has four consequences:



1. In communities where development has not occurred, it should only be allowed to proceed after the majority of scientific evidence demonstrates that oil and gas can be developed safely, and properly enforced rules are in place to protect communities and the environment.
2. In communities where development has already occurred, immediate action must be taken to ensure that impacts to public health are prevented based upon current science. To achieve this, the existing regulatory framework must move to policies that protect water, air, land, and the public, first, rather than maximizing quick resource development.
3. In both types of communities, no new drilling should be permitted for the foreseeable future, as neither the science, nor the public oversight exist to guarantee potentially impacted communities that their health and environment will be protected.
4. Responsible energy development requires prioritizing efficiency and renewables over oil and gas at the local, state, federal and international levels, and through individual consumer, private sector and government actions.

For too long, when confronted with hard questions, the oil and gas industry has told governments and communities, “trust us.” And unfortunately, we have - too often at the expense of investment in truly clean energy sources. Now, with spills, blowouts, flaming water faucets, earthquakes, contamination and health impacts grabbing headlines day after day, the time for “trusting” is over.

To put communities first, we must have answers before allowing action.

For More Information:

- Hydraulic Fracturing 101: <http://bit.ly/Fracking-101>
- *Breaking All the Rules: The Crisis in Oil & Gas Regulatory Enforcement:*
<http://bit.ly/Fracking-Enforcement>
- *Gas Patch Roulette: How Shale Gas Development Risks Public Health:*
<http://bit.ly/Fracking-Health>