

DESCRIPTION

HYDRAULIC FRACTURING (FRACKING) & TOXIC FRACKING WASTE

Hydraulic fracturing (fracking) is the process that follows the completion of a deep drilled lateral well (vertical depth and horizontal length average about 7,000 feet each way for a single well). Millions of gallons of highly pressurized, chemically laden water and sand are pumped down the well to force out gas or oil from shale formations. The 40,000 gallons or more of chemicals that are required for each well include carcinogens and toxins such as: lead, uranium, mercury, ethylene glycol, methanol, hydrochloric acid and formaldehyde (there are 600 such chemicals that may be used in the fracking process). The companies engaged in hydraulic fracturing will not reveal the composition of the chemicals they use, stating "these are proprietary formulas that if made public would impair their competitive position".

To retrieve the gas or oil, fracking also produces a very large flowback of fluids and sludge (waste) that return to the surface during the retrieval process. This waste contains many of the toxic chemicals mentioned that are used in the fracking process. The flowback process also picks up naturally occurring contaminants found underground including radioactive materials such as radium 226 that have been released from the rock formations by the fissures created by the fracking process.

The methods used for the disposal or storage of toxic fracking waste in Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia, although regulated, have all proved problematic according to a May 2012 study by the National Resources Defense Council. There is no reason to believe that Connecticut would fare any better or that these toxic and radioactive materials would not be introduced into CT's ecosystem. Yet, companies with large fracking operations in Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia are considering Connecticut as a place to dump huge amounts of toxic fracking waste resulting from their operations.

On June 15, 2014, Governor Malloy signed into law Public act Number 14 – 200 (SB 237) establishing a three – year moratorium on the disposal, storage, or sale of waste produced from hydraulic fracturing. During this period, the head of DEEP has to formulate regulations to govern such activities in a way that protects public health and the environment. Environmentalists are concerned that at the end of this period the cited regulations may be enacted thus permitting the entry of regulated toxic fracking waste into Connecticut.

The position of the Washington environmental Council is that fracking waste because of its toxic nature will be problematic, as cited in the May 2012 study of the National Resources Defense Council, and constitutes an unacceptable threat to public health and the environment. It supports the passage of the ordinance to be voted on at the town meeting on March 5th that would ban the storage, disposal or use of fracking waste or any derivative thereof in the Town of Washington.