



Don't Frack Our Fields: Protecting Farmland and The Rural Landscape From Oil and Gas Development

Sponsored by the 11th Hour Project and Claneil Foundation

For many in the agriculture field, fracking has presented unexpected, immediate, and significant threats. For this reason, organizations have had to pivot quickly and come up with creative ways to stave off danger from this rapidly spreading practice. This session will explore ways that farmers, ranchers, and sustainable agriculture advocacy organizations can build resilience against these threats. The speakers will touch on multiple consequences of fracking related to water quality, farming, and the food system. Following presentations by three speakers about risks to farms as well as farmers and the rural landscape, moderator Sarah Bell will engage the audience in a solutions-focused conversation, exploring how organizations can best respond to oil and gas development in their communities.

Moderator

Sarah Bell, *program manager, 11th Hour Project, CA*

Speakers

Dr. J. Stephen Cleghorn, *sociologist, organic farmer, and environmental activist, Jefferson County, PA*

Mark Schultz, *associate director, Land Stewardship Project, MN*

Brian Snyder, *executive director, Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture, PA*

INTRODUCTION // Sarah Bell

The fight against fracking is about building resilient communities and political power

PANEL PRESENTATIONS (No PowerPoints)

First speaker: Dr. Stephen Cleghorn

- Organic farmer from western PA, goat milk, cheeses, and vegetables; wife died of lung cancer → not fracking related in cause but in pain and suffering
- Case for a moratorium on drilling Marcellus shale (article available on www.paradisegardensandfarms.com)
- Addressing both risks (known and unknown) and current impacts
- Only own the surface lands as land owner (??)

- Personal pledge to learn about fracking everyday and communicate this information to people
- Fracking ruined his dream of small sustainable farm
- Cheap gas creating a boom in creation of synthetic fertilizers (dependence ensures) → negative impact on soil & water quality
- Multiplier effects of the gas industry into other industries
- 9% methane leakage → climate impact in the short term
- Gas industry in PA alone plans to overlap an industrial grid of a fracking system on top of half of the landmass (200,000 well plan to be drilled); compromising water sources into the future
- Wendell Berry poem highlighting the importance of the sense of place to this issue; in defense of the rights of nature
- Call to funders: What risks to endowments are funders willing to assume?
- List of the Harmed (since 2012; link: <http://pennsylvaniaallianceforcleanwaterandair.wordpress.com/the-list/>): list of people and animals harmed by fracking. System of first alert teams that bring resources and response abilities to communities in which fracking is happening and planning to happen.
- Need to support grassroots in a flexible, small scale, micro grants
- Need to create a people powered education system; system of trust to vet small organizations

Second speaker: Brian Snyder

- Fracking as fragmentation of communities
- Relationship between food system and the gas industry: principle ingredient in synthetic fertilizer
- PASA is the largest farmer based sustainable ag organization (6K members), representative of the range of political parties, united around the want for a more sustainable food system = strong common ground. Fracking changed this as economic incentives drove this collaboration and common ground apart. Additionally, some farmers are being solicited to frack their subsurface and some aren't; this solicitation process is not understood (who is chosen who isn't)
- PENN State: 80M hockey facilities paid by gas companies
- Farm Bureau backs fracking 100% from the property rights angle: "Natural gas boom is the number one program of preserving farmland"
- Boycott on food grown in gas producing regions, impact on farmers that are IN the region by didn't sign a contract to frack their land.
- Estate split: Difference between surface right and subsurface rights (these laws were written during time of coal exploration; mineral rights, but people are saying that oil is not a mineral)
- Hierarchy of needs in the community
- Decisions made in the community (leading to action)
 - (Below this) Discussions need to happen
 - Robust information needs to be available
 - Need strong organizations at the base of this process (support organizations locally, statewide, regionally)

- Moratorium is currently being discussed [Copies of statement made are available via Brian]

Third speaker: Mark Schultz

- 32,000 households in organization's membership
- Began taking on fracking as an issue in response to the call from their membership
- MN "has the best silica sand in the world" as part of the process that injects sand into fissures to keep them open and allowed gas to flow. This porous topography makes it easy for pollution (chemicals, CAFO runoff) to make it to the water table
- PASA was working on multiple issues (including healthcare reform, labor rights issues in the Latino communities, etc.) when the community began to bring up issue of fracking; PASA initially didn't want to take it on because of fear of lack of capacity.
- Holistic management: assume that you are incorrect and managed from the angle.
- Immediate (Life & death) issue as well as a threat to long term sustainability
- Why is this a critical issue for sustainable agriculture in the food system?
 - Impacts of frack sand mining
 - Silica sand becomes airborne outside of mine → silicosis→ cancer and petrification of the lungs
 - Water pollution; destruction of the aquifer; depletion of the aquifer with the large water demand of the sand processing
 - Damaged to public resources, roadways
 - Connection to the larger issue of frack mining
 - Corporate power of few companies
 - Detrimental to sustainable agriculture vision
- Building a sustainable power base for the future
 - Johanna Rupreck, the present and future of fracking is not inline with community economic development vision
 - Building a power base: #1 need is breadth (number of supporters)
 - Campaigns as a breadth-building strategy
 - Broad public
 - Supporters
 - Lists/engagement
 - Members
 - Leadership
 - Core leadership
- Frack sand organization helps them to build a broader base in support of sustainable agriculture
- Important to fund community organizing, to power a movement for societal transformation—very unfunded in the US

Q&A SESSION

Question: How do you fight demoralization moving forward?

Answer: [BS] Potlucks! Don't give up the little opportunities to celebrate; very important gathering in farm communities; [SC] Potlucks as a way to bring in more people into the

conversation. Overcoming the silence in the farming community, the awkwardness of neighbors pitted against neighbors. Don't confront people with their powerlessness. Ask different stakeholders to consider their involvement in the issues, make a welcoming space for this exploration → allowing people to personalize the issue for themselves to overcome sense of disempowerment; [MS] recognizing that it is a fight, that there are sides. Recognize the role of direct action, for people that want to go further. Importance of bridging the conversation. Celebrate victories of all sizes.

Question: Steven, how did you find out the build out plans for the infrastructure planned for fracking?

Answer: PENN professor was supplying information, I was running calculations from this information in order to get better sense of the scale and the density of these actions. And then messaging this information in a way that makes sense for the population that you are speaking to. Don't get caught up in the muck of the myriad of impacts and sub-impacts.

Question: How do we handle misinformation? And then how do you message correct info this to farmers

Answer: BS, question the information everywhere, esp. coming out of universities given their funders. At a point that need to support research that is being done on a smaller scale, outside of large universities.

Councils of sustainable farm organizations; work with small organizations that can get their info to their support base.

Personalized & distilled messaging: how does it affect ME as a community member? Less interested in large system design or policy changes, etc.

Question: Are there any national level groups around anti-fracking? If their aren't how are you sharing this info across the country? // How are targeting urban dwellers and how they will be impacted?

Answer: Stop the Frack Attack (link: <http://www.stopthefrackattack.org>) led by Earth Work. National conferences are important to the national conversation. People know what they are against more than what they are for. More unifying needed around people's vision (i.e. sustainable food system). Importance of connecting issues.

Question: ETC Group, organization in Quebec tracking new technologies. Gas-to-liquid technology is already available. Natural gas to petroleum technologies already exists. Technology already exists to add shale-converting microbes into fracking process. Shouldn't we be talking about this as well?

Answer: This is what is holding back 3D printing, insert gas line as a resource. Must deal with issues in front of us at present, while being suspicious of future spinoff extractive industries.

Additional comments:

- Conference by Heinz Foundation in Nov 2013 on the issues and the emerging issues. Checking the pulse on current research and information.
- HEFN has a Hydrofracking Working Group