



Citizens' Input

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Introduction

Natural gas drilling by hydraulic fracturing is a complex process with complicated implications and a variety of stakeholders, and all aspects of this process are important. The input and opinions of citizens is particularly important to the fracking situation because it is the reaction of the citizens that can determine the fate of the natural gas drilling industry and the fracking process. Ultimately decision makers in our democratic political system will react to whether citizens enthusiastically endorse the process or overwhelmingly reject it. By voicing their opinions in unison, the people have significant power to make change, which is why the effects that fracking have upon citizens are so crucial to the situation.

At this point, citizens have not come to a general consensus about the approval or disapproval of fracking; many are still caught up in the controversy. Some citizens side with industry while some side with environmentalists. Citizens' input is crucial to the controversy of fracking because citizens are both affected by and have an effect on the debate. Some citizens' opinions are swayed by their political opinions or the extent to which they value environmental health or economic prosperity. The controversy is affected by citizens' input based on the sentiment of citizens who have experienced fracking.

The general public should care about how citizens who are affected personally by fracking feel about the process out of compassion for their peers. Although not all citizens are directly affected by natural gas drilling, U.S. energy policy should not be reliant on a process that degrades the quality of life for those who are affected. All Americans should study the issue closely and consider the positive and negative implications that are felt by those who are most intimately involved with the issue before determining if they support or oppose fracking for natural gas extraction in the United States.

Topic Discussion

The potential for natural gas extraction and production to lead to lower fuel prices and energy independence for the United States makes fracking a prevalent issue in national energy conversations, but for some people the concerns are personal rather than political. Communities in Pennsylvania feel the effects in terms of their businesses, property, health, and local politics. Some of the impacts are positive and some are negative; many communities and their members struggle to decide which course of action is best for them.

Because hydraulic fracturing is relatively new to Pennsylvania, most communities are handicapped by the fact that there is no historic evidence on which to base decisions. How exactly a community will be changed by the new industry is anybody's estimation, which is why gas drilling can be so contentious. When a citizen answers his or her door to an industry representative proposing a lease for rights to drill on his or her land, he or she has little to turn to for aid in the decision but the anecdotal stories of others who have seen fracking occur in their community. Some citizens have found themselves prospering economically from drilling activity; others find it degrades the aesthetic quality of their environment. Some citizens have organized protests against the natural gas industry, while others make sure to vote for government representatives who will encourage industry activity in their area. The reactions of citizens have been variable and representative of a number of potential effects of natural gas development. These first-hand accounts may not provide quantifiable statistics on fracking, however, the sentiments of affected citizens do capture a personal element that is just as important as any statistic about methane emissions or water contamination.

Although unconventional natural gas drilling is currently being either developed or prepped for development in regions across the country where shale can be found, our interests

pertain specifically to the activity in Pennsylvania. This discussion focuses primarily on the responses to fracking of citizens of Bradford and Susquehanna Counties, areas of Pennsylvania that have experienced some of the highest amount of hydraulic drilling in the state.

The introduction of a new industry into a community most certainly will have an impact upon other small businesses. In Bradford County, some small businesses experienced economic gains while others felt injured by the fracking activity. Steve Pelton, the owner of a small trucking business, found that natural gas drilling gave his business better opportunities. He switched from transporting milk to transporting water for fracking, which proved to be a more booming industry. His business became dramatically more successful, enabling him to pay employees more and prepare for his own retirement. The dairy industry had been floundering, making the transition more welcome for citizens like Pelton who were eager to find a more profitable market in which to participate (Sataline, 2012).

Other types of small businesses in Bradford County that rely on more people entering the community also have improved economic prosperity as a result of fracking. When the natural gas industry enters a community, it brings workers who will provide a variety of businesses with customers. Empowering Staffing Solutions, a temporary-employment agency within Bradford County, reported that the area lacked people to fill the large number of available jobs. Vice President Fred Cavallaro said they placed about 750 workers in manufacturing, production, and food jobs in 2011 (Sataline, 2012).

While some businesses enjoyed the influx of people and economic activity, not all small businesses benefitted from the emergence of the natural gas industry. The industrial activity in the rural landscape of Bradford County disrupts businesses that depend on the health of the

natural environment. Examples are the dairy farmers in Bradford County who have noticed that their water has been contaminated, which hurts their business because the water is ingested by the cattle. One citizen named Carol French said some farmers do not even report their water contamination because they do not want the poor reputation associated with a farm with bad water. She said some dairy farmers in that situation keep quiet and buy water until they are able to sell the cows and the property, leaving the problem to the next person (Pribanic, 2012). Another example is citizen Dave Buck, who fears noise pollution from drilling will hurt his kayak rental business, Endless Mountain Outfitters. If customers find that industrial noise detracts from their kayaking experience, they will be less likely to rent from his business (Sataline, 2012).

State elections have reflected the fact that fracking is currently such a controversial issue in Pennsylvania. Bradford County is located within District 23 of the Pennsylvania State Senate. The 2012 election between incumbent Republican Gene Yaw and Democratic challenger Luana Cleveland provided evidence of the effect that fracking has had on local politics. Each candidate wanted to appeal to voters, yet their platforms contained very different positions.

Luana Cleveland's position on fracking is that a moratorium on gas drilling, particularly in the natural areas of state forests, should be put in place until the impact on the lives and health of citizens can be more fully understood and adequately protected. Cleveland advocates for citizens' ability to protect their property and nearby lands without needing to fight gas companies in court. She believes that communities should have control of the zoning regulations within their own borders. Furthermore, Cleveland believes that communities should be compensated financially for the burdens of industrial activity that are carried by human services, education, and health systems. Finally, Cleveland asserts that the idea that doctors must agree to

confidentiality when requesting information about potentially harmful chemicals is wrong (Cleveland, 2012).

Republican incumbent Gene Yaw expressed a significantly different opinion on fracking from Luana Cleveland's. He supports the idea that if done properly, fracking is "a tremendous asset; if managed properly it could be a positive thing for generations." In an attempt to ensure that gas industry remains controlled and reputable, Yaw introduced legislation such as Senate Bill 297, which increases transparency of the fracking process by reducing periods of confidentiality that would otherwise protect the industry's business secrets. Yaw supports good business that is characterized by transparency and competition, and he hopes to promote those qualities in the gas industry in Pennsylvania. When questioned about his concerns or fears regarding the fracking process, Yaw responded that he does not have many fears. He expressed a desire to refrain from making enemies as well as faith in the industry and the capacity of business and government to address problems. He feels that problems are a normal part of any industry and remains optimistic about the fracking situation (Kathykolb, 2009).

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FXH0Wi7a4u4>

Video of Gene Yaw responding to interview questions by representatives from NorthCentralPA.com, a news and event resource for the north central region of Pennsylvania (Kathykolb, 2009).

On November 6, 2012, citizens of the 23rd Senatorial District of Pennsylvania voted and Gene Yaw was re-elected (Wilson, 2012c). As the incumbent, Gene Yaw had a political advantage over his challenger, Luana Cleveland. However, had there been a general consensus or mandate among citizens that their representative needed to oppose fracking, then Luana Cleveland certainly would have been able to secure the win. Citizens did not appear to feel that they needed a representative who would protect their anti-fracking interests.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is responsible for regulation of fracking in Pennsylvania. The most notoriously controversial legislation pertaining to fracking is called Act 13, which standardizes zoning laws in Pennsylvania and allows local governments to adopt an impact fee on gas drilling companies (“Act 13 of 2012”). The Act is controversial because some believe standardization of zoning laws strips municipalities of power to protect their communities, while others believe the Act is a sufficient tool for regulation. The current administration in Harrisburg has supported the idea of utilizing natural gas in Pennsylvania, yet many contend that the DEP has failed to regulate in an acceptable manner. In April of 2011, Bradford County Commissioner Mark Smith criticized the DEP, saying “DEP officials are quoted in the media as saying they spend as little as 35 minutes to approve each gas well permit. This is an appalling statistic considering the significant operations and impact of a natural gas drilling site and even more appalling considering that there have been nearly 2,000 gas wells permitted in Bradford County” (Baumann, 2012). Another consideration of the Bradford County Commissioners is how to use \$8.4 million that the county will receive this year in impact fee revenue from fracking. The options are either to eliminate the county’s debt, which could result in a reduction of homeowners’ tax, or to provide support to government programs such as emergency services, housing, and social services (Loewenstein, 2012).

In addition to local officials, regular citizens have expressed dissatisfaction with DEP’s capacity to address problems related to fracking. For example, Chesapeake Energy Corporation, a gas drilling company, has attempted to temporarily fix the contaminated well of Michael Phillips of Terry Township in Bradford County. Phillips reported that DEP Secretary Michael Krancer visited the site of the well but was unable to answer Phillips’ question about if the well

can be fixed (Legere, 2011). Some citizens have banded together to oppose lenient DEP regulation in the Clean Air Council Citizens' Group. The group appealed a permit for the expansion of a compressor station in Herrick Township, Bradford County. They believe that because of other sources of pollution already in the area, the DEP should have refused to allow any more pollution via the compressor station (Phillips, 2012).

Fracking became a critical issue to the 2012 election for the 111th District of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. Susquehanna County lies within this district. Republican incumbent Sandra Major made clear that her position on fracking is that Pennsylvania should take advantage of the resource. Democratic challenger Jeffrey Dahlander, however, preferred that the state invest in more sustainable projects that promote energy efficiency and green technology. When the pair was asked about their opinions on the controversial Act 13, Major asserted that Act 13 was put in place to facilitate consistency of fracking operations across both zoned and unzoned areas of Pennsylvania. She claimed that this is more environmental regulation than had existed before. In contrast, Dahlander argued that Act 13 was unfair because it was developed in harmony with industry desires rather than citizen desires. Furthermore, he questioned DEP's ability to address problems with what he believes to be an understaffed office (Wilson, 2012b). On November 6, 2012, Sandra Major won the election, illustrating that citizens are not concerned enough about stopping fracking as to fire Sandra Major and bring in a representative with a more anti-fracking perspective (Wilson, 2012c).

Within Susquehanna County is a town called Dimock, Pennsylvania, which is commonly known as the "ground zero of fracking," made famous for the horrible impacts highlighted by

Josh Fox's documentary *Gasland*. However, not all citizens have such a dismal outlook on fracking in Dimock. Jim Grimsley, a citizen of Dimock, says that "many local businesses who were on the verge of failing are now flourishing, and local people who were making minimum wage are now doing well driving tanker trucks or working on the pipelines. I look at it as progress." The economic gains that citizens have made through leasing their land have enabled them to buy new cars and pay off their mortgages, and many view this as evidence of the positive consequences of bringing natural gas drilling into a community (Woods, 2011).

Overall, citizens in Dimock have conflicting views on the benefits and drawbacks of fracking within their community. Those who support the drilling believe that when state regulators mandated that Cabot Oil and Gas temporarily cease drilling operations in Dimock in the wake of contamination controversy, resulted in punishment not for the gas companies, but for the citizens rendered unable to collect royalties from their gas leases. These citizens point out that the companies simply must drill elsewhere to gain profits, while citizens are less fortunate (Maykuth, 2012). Some of these citizens who welcome the industry into Dimock formed the citizens' group Dimock Proud, countering the message that natural gas drilling had destroyed their community and compromised their health and safety. They argue that anti-fracking champions have not told the whole truth (Grimsley & Van Lenten).

Some of those citizens who are not happy with the presence that the natural gas industry has had in their community of Dimock banded together at Philadelphia's Academy of Natural Sciences conference on urban environmental issues in January 2012. They implored Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) head Lisa Jackson to take action about the problems with fracking. They also requested that EPA provide them with clean water (Mulvihill, 2012).

Act 13 and DEP regulations have inspired passionate reactions from the people of Susquehanna County. Rebecca Roter, Susquehanna County resident, is displeased with government failure to protect citizens from being exploited by an aggressive industry desiring only profits. She feels her rights to clean water have not been protected and that the citizens of areas that are undergoing drilling are being displaced. She mentions the federal government and “Halliburton Loophole” as a cause of the problem (Roter, 2011). Not all citizens feel all parts of Act 13 are dissatisfactory, however. Municipalities are able to collect monies as a result of drilling in their area, called impact fees. When Susquehanna County commissioners held a town hall meeting to determine whether to impose the state’s impact fee from Act 13, the majority of citizens supported Act 13’s measure to provide localities with compensation for drilling (Wilson, 2012a).

Profiles of Key Individuals and Groups

Due to their experience with communities and fracking, the following four individuals can be considered experts on the topic of citizens’ input regarding fracking in Pennsylvania’s Bradford and Susquehanna Counties. The first is Susan Phillips, a reporter from State Impact. State Impact is a joint project between National Public Radio and local public radio stations to examine the impact of state policies and then inform and engage citizens based on findings. As Susan is one of two reporters examining fracking in Pennsylvania, she has extensive knowledge of the subject matter. Her articles cover subjects like government regulation, citizen response, academic studies, and legal action. They strive to expose the real effects of fracking activity in Pennsylvania. Susan’s background includes a Bachelor’s degree in International Relations from George Washington University and a graduate degree in Journalism from Columbia School of

Journalism. Her work has been critically acclaimed; she won an award for her coverage of Pennsylvania's natural gas rush in the series called "The Shale Game." Susan can be contacted via email at sphillips@whyy.org.

Second on the list of experts on the subject of citizens' input regarding fracking is Bradford County Commissioner Doug McLinko. Doug McLinko can be considered particularly knowledgeable because he was part of a group of individuals who provided testimony on the impacts of fracking to the Republican Policy Committee of the Pennsylvania State Senate. McLinko provided information about how Bradford County has been affected by Marcellus Shale development, specifically in regard to improved economic prosperity, a housing shortage, and increased crime. McLinko can be reached through the Bradford County Commissioners Office at bccom@bradfordco.org.

Another individual who could provide testimony regarding the opinions of citizens on fracking is Janenne Goliash. She serves as legislative aide to Pennsylvania State Senator Gene Yaw. Her office is in Towanda, which is within Bradford County. As a legislative aide, Goliash would have the greatest capacity to provide information about the sentiments about fracking that citizens have expressed. This is because the district offices handle constituent relations the most out of the Senator's office and respond to the majority of calls or visits that citizens pay to the office. Janenne Goliash can be reached at jgoliash@pasen.gov.

Finally, attorney Douglas A. Clark of The Clark Law Firm, PC., can serve as an expert on the subject of citizens' input regarding fracking in Pennsylvania because he provides legal council to citizens going through the process of leasing their land for natural gas drilling. His work requires that he help clients through the entire process, explaining details, answering

questions, and offering recommendations. Through his work with these clients, Clark would learn their priorities and their concerns. Clark's background includes six years of experience in the area of oil and gas legal counsel. He can be contacted by phone at The Clark Law Firm, PC. office at (570) 307-0702. His website is located at <http://www.avvo.com/attorneys/18452-pa-douglas-clark-606963/website.html>.

Web Resources for Additional Information

1. <http://stateimpact.npr.org/pennsylvania/>

This website, which is a joint project between National Public Radio and PA local radio stations, provides reports from two reporters on energy, the environment, and the economy in Pennsylvania. Because Marcellus Shale development is inextricably related to those issues, most of the reporting is related to natural gas. This website is an excellent resource that provides in depth coverage of the drilling debate. The information is balanced and does not promote a particular agenda. The site is easy to navigate and the articles are easy to find, but it is not very interactive. Links to other sites and discussions are limited.

2. <http://www.fractracker.org/>

FracTracker is a nonprofit alliance that recognizes the gaps in data that make natural gas drilling so full of uncertainty. Because the impacts are largely unknown and there is a lack of baseline data in terms of health, environment, and societal effects, [fractracker.org](http://www.fractracker.org) provides a place for people to share information. Graphs, maps, and commentaries are all compiled in this website in order to help those involved in fracking to understand what is really going on. Much of the information is technical in nature and

is probably beyond the understanding of the average citizen; however the information is thorough and abundant. The site has tabs for easy navigation, and photos add to its appearance. The goal appears to be to be a watchdog of the gas industry.

3. http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/act_13/20789

Although the government regulations are a different aspect of the fracking debate all together, regulations are crucial to the topic of citizens' input because of the influence that citizens have on our governing and regulatory bodies. When regulation is not strong enough or is too restrictive, citizens react in response. The PA DEP website's page on natural gas provides information for citizens on fracking regulations and the actions the agency is taking to promote the well being of its citizens. The page provides clear information about what Act 13 is, links to informational webinars, and a hotline to report suspected environmental emergencies. The site is very straightforward and unbiased (aside from the biases toward industry within the PA government that many argue exist).

4. <http://dimockproud.com/>

Dimock Proud is an excellent example of a community group that has organized their efforts of promoting their cause. Dimock Proud projects a positive, optimistic perspective of the effects of natural gas drilling in Dimock, Pennsylvania. The website states their purpose and mission clearly, and provides opportunities for citizens to become involved with the group. It offers information on technical aspects of fracking, provides a forum for community discussion, provides links to relevant news stories, and has video footage that enhances the attractiveness of the site. The information is biased toward a pro-drilling point of view, however it provides information on a variety of aspects of the fracking process.

5. www.citizensvoice.com

CitizensVoice is the Luzerne County newspaper website, which provides easy access to its fracking related articles. The search tool returned a large number of articles related to Marcellus Shale. Title, date, and author information is readily visible. Stories older than 30 days are in the archives, which is also clearly and visibly labeled. Much information on citizens' opinions comes from news articles that contain quotes and interviews of affected citizens. A newspaper website with clarity and a large collection of articles provides the most balanced and thorough information.

6. <http://www.publicherald.org/archives/category/fracking-2/>

Public Herald is a non-profit organization of journalists committed to providing the public with investigative reporting and a forum for engagement regarding issues and conditions that face communities. Specifically, the organization investigates situations in which citizens' opinions may be overshadowed by government, industry, or society. A section of the website dedicated to fracking contains articles that provide an investigation into natural gas pollution, regulations, and remediation. The site is simple to navigate and provides easy ways for readers to comment on the articles or to become more involved through email subscriptions and social media. A significant amount of information is available, however most stories represent the anti-fracking perspective.

For More Information

1. <http://marcelluscoalition.org/>

Citizens interested in learning more about oil and gas company policies and practices can browse this website that argues the economic positive impacts of natural gas development.

2. <http://shaleshockmedia.org/about/>

This site provides videos, photos, and commentary from citizens with negative experiences involving natural gas drilling.

3. <http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/fracking/>

This website provides information and resources to citizens from an environmental activism organization that advocates for clean water and opposes fracking.

4. http://water.epa.gov/type/groundwater/uic/class2/hydraulicfracturing/wells_hydrowhat.cfm

Citizens can look to the EPA website to find the role the federal government plays in protecting citizens' health and safety.

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