

# Letter to the editor

## Envirommetally accountable fracking a must

The recent article regarding hydraulic fracturing ("Fracking protests not expected to hit county", p. 10, Oct. 29 *Mountain View Gazette*) greatly misrepresents the facts on this complicated process and this misinformation prevents the public from making educated choices when dealing with industry and excuses the industry from being accountable for environmentally safe fracturing.

Here are scientific facts about the current state of hydraulic fracturing in our county. All of the following information was compiled from disclosure documents obtained from the Frac Focus-Chemical Disclosure Registry website which allows users to read current fracture reports using an interactive map.

I reviewed all of the 96 reports listed from 2013 from all of the companies extracting resources in Mountain View County and here are the key components of those disclosures condensed for your review.

Water usage: Average water use per well: 2,150 m<sup>3</sup> = 2.150 million litres of water. Most water used, 4.206 million litres by Angle Energy Inc. Keep in mind, up to half or more of this fluid remains down-hole, never to return to the hydrologic cycle and does not account for water also used during drilling of the well prior to completions.

Water used during drilling is equally as much as fracturing which represents two to eight million litres of fresh water per well. There were only two reports that stated using four and five per cent flow-back water, so the statement that area stakeholders are using alternative water sources as opposed to fresh water is false.

Average number of chemical additives per well: 12  
Highest number of additives: 35, by Pengrowth Industries.

Twelve: Highest number of "trade secret" additives in a fracture report, also by Pengrowth.

Aside from five wells that were fracked with 100 per cent liquid nitrogen, all the remaining well reports had either "trade secret" ingredients or "not available" additives. The average was three chemicals not disclosed per well.

Types of chemicals used regularly in our county

that are considered toxic, irritants, endocrine disrupters, teratogens (able to cause birth defects), and carcinogens (known to or suspected to cause cancer): Solvent benzene and benzene derivatives, terpene, xylene, petroleum distillates, kerosene, diesel fuel, solvent naphtha and naphthalene, chlorinated, aromatic and halogenated hydrocarbons, dibromoacetonitrile, isopropanol, diethylenetriamine, di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate, tetrakis hydroxymethyl phosphonium sulfate, acrylamide, formaldehyde, crotonaldehyde, ethylene glycol, formamide and acetaldehyde... just to name a few, and there were many other chemicals that I simply could not find on the Hazardous Substance Data Bank, things like 5-cholor-2-methyl-2h-isothiazolol-3-one.

The industry will play down the volumes but these chemicals can constitute hundreds of thousands of litres in each well.

Frac fluid that is not left in the ground is land-spread, burnt off, reused or injected into disposal wells.

There are numerous ways for these chemicals to pollute water sources and land, from surface contamination, spills, casing failures, human error and inter-well communications. There are actually several cases of known well contaminations in Alberta, (look up Grande Prairie + Frac Contamination) and certainly many more cases that are hidden by "non-disclosure" agreements which are typical with lease agreements in Alberta.

Standard water tests are also inadequate to reveal these chemicals to the resident. Unless you demand a water test that specifically looks for BTEXs, hydrocarbons and additional metals, you would not know your water is tainted with these substances.

This type of water testing costs about \$3,000.

One hundred per cent hydrocarbon and nitrogen fracturing: 18 of the 96 wells drilled in our county in 2013 thus far were fractured using no water at all; just hydrocarbon fluid, frac oil, crude oil, liquid nitrogen or in some reports "no specific ingredients".

One such well was 300 metres from our home and during the frac job the lease site was greatly

contaminated with this fuel from leaks and spills, however, the contaminated soil was deemed safe to land-spread.

The resulting frac flare was also non-compliant, endangering public health by improperly burning this fuel as it returned to the wellhead.

Another liquid propane frac near our home non-compliantly burned billions of litres of gas.

Proppant: Most of the controversy is over frac fluid but one major constituent, averaging 10 per cent of the frac solution is the proppant, a solid that is used to keep the fissures made by the mini explosions of fracking open.

The industry claims the proppant is sand but in fact, in the great majority of wells it is crystalline silica (quartz) which is a known carcinogen.

Using this product exposes workers and the public to a health hazard.

So now that you have the truth about what is really being injected at intense pressure and high volume beneath our county, what can you do as a resident or landowner to improve the process of fracturing and make it safe for the public and environment?

Insist on a disclosure of fracture fluid additives prior to the well being fraced so that you can question and approve the chemicals prior to injection.

Campaign for food-grade safe fracture fluids, decreased water use and absolutely no hydrocarbon fracturing.

Have the company test your water prior to commencement of activity and do not sign a lease agreement with a "non-disclosure" statement imbedded in it.

Finally, write letters to Alberta Health Services, the Alberta Energy Regulator, your local synergy group, MLA or our municipality and make a formal request for changes in water use, termination of use of known toxins and "trade secret" protected additives in fracturing and more funds directed to regulatory change, water testing and research and development of renewable energy, and if you feel so inclined...protest!

Diana Daunheimer  
Didsbury

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