



Are You Fracking Kidding Me? EPA report links groundwater pollution to fracking.

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Recently, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced, for the first time, that they have evidence linking fracking to groundwater pollution. This finding — resulting from complaints of Wyoming residents that their wells reeked of chemicals — is important on many levels, especially as states, like New York, are evaluating the pros and cons of this controversial oil and gas recovery method.

What is Fracking?

Fracking is a procedure used to increase oil and gas recovery from wells, especially where the rate of recovery has been in decline or deposits are trapped in geographic formations.

In basic terms, fracking — short for hydraulic fracturing — is the injection of pressurized water, sand and chemicals underground to force oil and gas toward the surface for collection by recovery wells.

While the appearance of volatile compounds associated with chemicals used in fracking in drinking water is alarming, other fracking issues — such as degradation of unspoiled lands, the high levels of energy required by the process and the resulting high level of emissions — are key to the arguments of why fracking should be banned.

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Sea Level Rise and What It Means to the North Fork Study, planning and education are needed.

You've heard the words of warning...Global warming; Climate change; Polar ice melting. No matter the phrase of the day and how well or poorly it captures the scientific reality, the end result is the same — significant rise in water levels...in fact, we've already seen signs of it.

Being on an island, we have a sense of how we might be affected by rising seas. But in order to address what this means to the North Fork, we must step back and understand how different aspects of our daily lives are connected.

Sea Level Rise — Fact or Fiction?

Whether you believe in the phenomenon of global warming — or, better worded; global climate change — or not, the scientific facts are in...our seas are rising and they have been since the last ice age. During the 20th century the rate of rise increased, primarily due to water ocean temperatures and faster water melt from glaciers and polar ice caps.

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Are You Fracking Kidding Me? (continued)

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Canary in the Coal Mine

The incident in Pavillion, WY at the heart of the EPA's report serves as an early warning to the perils of fracking. Although the fracking chemicals are generally injected well below most groundwater and lower aquifers — see image below — the amount and force of the injected elements can mean pollution of water tables above the injection wells. And in Pennsylvania, residents there say that their wells have been contaminated by methane and drilling fluids as a result of fracking.

But the fracking process is but one danger. Poor drilling practices have been shown to affect water sources.

In some cases documented by the EPA, cement liners, which seal off the well and prevent leaking of drilling and fracking fluids into the top levels of the ground, were either installed improperly or not at all. But as fracking occurs at different levels at different sites, the ways fracking can pollute ground water and aquifers are numerous...and in many cases, not subject to clear, proven and enforced guidelines.

Today's Reality

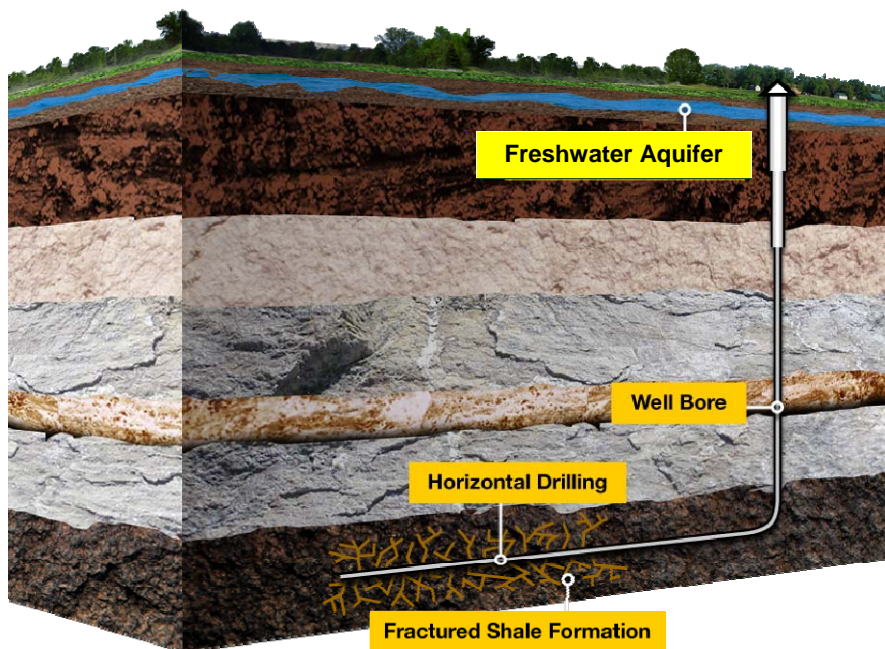
It is estimated that 90% of gas wells in the US today employ fracking. An outright ban would mean lower supplies and higher prices of both gas and oil. But even more stringent requirements on testing, cementing and chemicals used would mean higher costs of

recovery, thus higher prices passed onto consumers. Clean drinking water is worth the price...it has to be.

But for all of the damage fracking incurs below ground, other dangers are lurking above the surface, including:

- **high water usage** — a single fracked well can use 7 million gallons, 30% of which is lost, which has added to drought conditions in many communities
- **wastewater discharged from drilling and fracking wells** — many operations discharge wastewater, some of which is radioactive, into holding ponds or sewer systems that cannot remove contaminants, leading to pollution of rivers and public water supplies
- **spills of fracking chemicals** — with an increase in the number of fracking wells comes an increase of surface spills and groundwater contamination
- **emissions from fracking operations are polluting the air** — operations have led to worsening smog in rural areas and several areas in western states no longer meet federal air quality standards, with cancer-causing toxins being released from wells

Why should you care? Not only do people need to take a greater interest in what's happening elsewhere in the country, but New York State is considering opening up vast shale deposits to fracking operations.



Calendar Corner

upcoming NFEC events and key dates

January

ALL JANUARY

NFEC Membership Drive

Please take the time to renew your NFEC membership to support our expanded slate of programs and events for 2012.

MONDAY, JANUARY 9

NFEC Board Meeting 6:00 PM
NFEC Offices, Mattituck

February

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 13

NFEC Board Meeting 6:00 PM

Please check the NFEC Web site and local papers for the location of this "On the Road" Board meeting.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 20

NFEC "No Bake" Bake Sale

The NFEC puts its own spin on the traditional bake sale. For your support of this event and the NFEC, you can win one of several raffle prizes. Now you're cooking!

March

MONDAY, MARCH 12

NFEC Board Meeting 6:00 PM

NFEC Offices, Mattituck

Are You Fracking Kidding Me? (continued)

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Lessons to Take Away

The fact that the US gas and oil industry must rely so heavily on fracking is not a testament to abundant US supplies of oil and gas or advances in recovery technology. It's an indicator of just how depleted oil and gas reserves are. **It indicates the need is greater than ever to develop reliable and affordable renewable sources of energy.**

The benefit of more oil and gas supplies must be measured against the cost of air and water pollution, both in terms of increased health issues but also the permanent loss of crucial supplies of drinking water.

The EPA continues to work towards harsher requirements, including:

- identification of all fracking chemicals
- tighter wastewater discharge rules
- tighter emissions controls

But the states are at the forefront of the fracking battle. Many states, including NY, are blinded by the amount of new jobs would be created by allowing fracking. But we cannot let short-term economic solutions be put ahead of the long-term health of our land, air and water resources...not to mention the health of our families today and for years to come.

Fracking may not be a North Fork

issue...but it should be. If we sit idly by and let the State permit such environmentally damaging practices elsewhere, what's to say they wouldn't feel empowered to do something as wanton and destructive in our backyard. We should be making calls to not permit fracking in New York State until more research is done and greater controls are put in place. We should be supporting greater research and supporting development of alternative, renewable energy technologies.

Tell the DEC and Gov. Cuomo by visiting: www.riverkeeper.org/news-events/news/safeguard-drinking-water/tell-the-dec-and-cuomo-dont-frack-with-nys-water/

***The Lighter Side of...* New Age Environmentalism**

The fight to protect the environment is a serious task with dire consequences if we fail in our mission. But for every story about a serious issue, there are two sides. So from time to time, we'd like to take a moment, share a smile and a laugh, and look at, *The Lighter Side*.

It's sometimes hard to fathom, for grandparent and grandchild alike, that for all of our differences we are still so very much alike.

The following is taken — reclaimed and recycled, if you will — from bits and pieces of several of those anonymous, mass-distributed emails which circulate around the Web every few months. It's timely given Southampton's recent ban on plastic shopping bags. What was once old can be new again.

That "Green Thing"

While in the line at the store, I overheard the cashier tell an older gentleman that he should bring his own reusable grocery bags as plastic bags were banned since they weren't good for the environment. The man apologized and explained, "We didn't have the 'green thing' back in my day."

The clerk responded, "That's our problem today. Your generation didn't care enough to save our environment!"

I thought about it. The cashier was right. My generation didn't have the green thing in its day.

Back then, we returned milk bottles, soda bottles and beer bottles to the store. The store sent them back to the plant to be washed and sterilized and refilled, so it could use the same bottles over and over again.

But we didn't have the green thing back in our day.

Back then, we walked up stairs because we didn't have an escalator or elevator in every store and office building. We walked and didn't climb into a gas-guzzling car every time we had to go two blocks to the store. And our stores didn't stay open 24/7, burning the imported midnight oil to light the signs that pierced the dark of the night and kept the frozen drink machine spinning.

But he was right. We didn't have the green thing in our day.

Back then, we washed the baby's diapers because we didn't have the disposable kind. And we dried those diapers and other clothes on a line, not in an energy-gobbling machine burning up 220 volts — wind and solar power really did dry and sterilize the clothes. Kids got hand-me-down clothes from their brothers or sisters. It was cheaper to repair than to replace most things.

But that green thing. We didn't have it back in our day.

Back then, we had one TV or a radio in the house — not a TV in every room, let alone a cable box, DVD player and Xbox. And that TV had a small screen the size of a handkerchief (remember them?), not the size of the state of Montana.

In the kitchen, we blended foods and stirred drinks by hand because we didn't have electric machines to chop, dice and puree for us. And in the yard, we didn't fire up an engine and burn gasoline just to cut the lawn. We used a push mower that ran on human power.

No green thing in my day, that's for sure.

Back then, we exercised by working. We didn't need to go to a health club to run on treadmills that operate on electricity. And when we were thirsty, we drank water from a fountain instead of using a plastic cup or bottle. And whether at home or at the gym, we replaced the razor blades in a razor instead of throwing away the whole razor just because the blade got dull.

But that cashier was so very right. We didn't have the green thing back then.

Back then, the whole family had one car, not a car for each person over the age of 17. People took the streetcar or a bus to work and kids rode their bikes to school...or walked.

We wrote letters with a pen — which we refilled with ink — not a computer, keyboard, monitor and printer. We spoke on phones that didn't require the recharging of a toxic battery pack every day. And one electrical outlet in each room was enough to meet our needs.

So to the current generation, my generation apologizes. Not because we didn't have the green thing back then but because we didn't know that we were being green before green was cool. Okay, and we apologize for still saying, "cool."

Sea Level Rise and What It Means to the North Fork (continued)

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Conservative projections — conservative because they do not take into account the rapid melt of land-based ice — expect sea levels to rise from six inches to over 23 inches by the year 2100. Projections which do take into account land-based ice melt — which has been observed and measured — put amount of sea level rise at 20 to 55 inches.

Sea level rise is here and it's going to keep increasing for decades to come.

Why should I be concerned?

Whether you live along the coast or inland, sea level rise will affect every aspect of life on the North Fork.

Along the Sound we've already experienced the greater erosion and property damage typical coastal winter storms can incur because of higher sea levels. Such episodes will become more common, even on bayside properties. This will mean an increase in insurance premiums for all.

Higher sea levels will also exert pressure on drinking water supplies as salt water incursion into surface waters and upper aquifers will taint many home wells. In addition, low lying septic systems and municipal storm and waste water drainage systems will be at risk of flooding and failing. And flooded septic systems will mean greater leaching of nitrates and other pollutants into our ponds, streams and waterways.

For many waterfront properties, sea level rise will mean loss of property, expansion of wetlands, less beach area and greater erosion.

This will translate into fewer areas for public beach use and beach access. It will also mean more commercial and residential property owners looking for permits to harden their properties and hold back the rising water by installing rock walls and bulkheads.

Just this year, Southold Town entertained a suggestion to reduce hardened shorelines by 20%. But in looking at recent increases in sea levels and storm damage, the proposal was set aside for further study.

Environmental Impact

While property owners will focus on what is happening at home, we can't lose sight of what will happen to the environment, as a whole.

All of the factors outlined above will contribute to the degradation of the overall ecosystem through loss of habitat and increased pollution. For example, as sea levels rise, salt marshes will be under water and not subject to daily surface exposure from tidal action. Many species of wildlife will be affected, from burrowing crabs to nesting shore birds.

As we consider hardening our shorelines to protect our property and land, we're depriving fish and other wildlife of their natural nesting and nursery habitats. How do we measure and value the trade-offs?

Increases in seaside building and greater pumping of fresh water from local water tables to serve these homes and businesses has resulted in additional stress on the land, adding to the natural slow sinking of coastal properties. When is enough enough, given the coming pressures of sea rise?

Next Steps

The issue of sea level rise and what can and should be done will occupy the leaders of Riverhead and Southold Towns for years to come. And as studying turns to planning and action, we must balance the needs of property owners with the needs of the environment and the people, businesses and wildlife which are dependent on clean waters, vibrant fish and shellfish nursery grounds, active marshlands, and the natural interaction needed between land and water. We all need to learn more so we can react in a more responsible and positive manner.

NORTH FORK VIEWS

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Preserving the Old Seafood Barge Property

The Denson family looking to give back to the community and the bay

As you may have read in a recent issue of the *Suffolk Times*, Southold Town and the Trustees have agreed to study the viability of purchasing the old Seafood Barge property along the mouth of Hashamomuck Pond. This is a critical purchase for the Town and the environment and we ask Southold Town residents to express their support.

Background

Back in January 2011, the Denson family reached out to the NFEC and asked for help in finding a way to preserve this strategically-located property. Carol Denson explained that the family did not want to see additional commercial use and development along this stretch of waterfront. Instead, the family wanted to put the property to use in a way that gave something back to the Town and helped to advance the preservation of local fisheries and wildlife.

Soon after this call, several NFEC Board members had the opportunity to share our conversations with Southold Town Supervisor Scott Russell. Scott was not only aware of the Densons' desire to preserve the property but he had already started evaluating different options that could best serve the community. He asked for our thoughts and we shared with him some informal conversations we had with the Cornell University Cooperative Extension.

Over the coming months, we helped to bring together key aspects of Scott's vision, Cornell's mission and the NFEC's ideas. We also talked with other groups to gauge their level of interest and support.

The Vision

When put together, the pieces formed a unique opportunity to not just preserve the property but to make it a working launch and off-load site for local baymen as well as an education and research center for Cornell's programs. And when put before Carol Denson, she said that this was the exact type of multi-use, environmentally friendly purpose the family hoped could be put in place.

The key part to the plan in maintaining the property and reducing costs is Cornell's willingness to serve as a site manager. At first, Cornell will use the property to launch their research and restoration boats for eastern sites. The old barge itself will be used to store equipment. At the same time, Cornell will oversee the site itself.

Over time, Cornell will use the creek waters to store and study various shellfish. And after engineering studies are complete and additional funding secured, it is hoped that the barge will be turned into a field classroom for local grade school and college students. This is a great opportunity for local youth to see that there are career opportunities right here at home in helping to protect, restore and preserve local habitats and fisheries.

In addition to the research and educational component of the property, it's planned that each year a select number of local baymen will be able to use the property as a boat launch and off-load site for their catch in the hopes of helping to continue the baymen's livelihood and way of life.

Moving Forward

After the early discussions about the preservation efforts and preliminary ideas, time passed as the business of running the town and elections slowed progress in bringing the vision to life. Then later this year, active discussions resumed and the plan seems on track for a complete study and careful evaluation.

The NFEC asks Southold residents and businesses to voice their support for this unique and important preservation effort. It not only supports efforts to restore and protect critical fisheries and habitats, it exposes local students first hand to new career options and opportunities.

In addition, Hashamomuck Pond is one of the town's listed impaired waterways. Preserving the entryway to this troubled creek from future development is important as the town and various agencies and groups look for ways to clean up this special place.

In the weeks and months ahead, the NFEC hopes that the town will understand the importance of this preservation effort and find a way to work with the Densons to make the sale/purchase viable, and to work with Cornell and other parties to ensure the site's continued operation and realization of the vision of a full-time working, research and educational facility.

Please lend your support to this effort. It's good for the town. It's critical for the environment and the North Fork's way of life.

contributed by:

Bill Toedter, NFEC president

The Navy's Plan to Clean Up Calverton Shared It's a good start but much more needs to get done.

After months of waiting, the U.S. Navy revealed its remediation plan for the toxic plume at the former Grumann airfield in Calverton. The informal presentation was made as part of the quarterly Calverton Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) meeting in November. But because of poorly conceived and timed release of notice to the public and a last minute change of venue, the Navy listened to calls from local groups and elected representatives to hold a second public meeting in December. In addition, they extended the public comment period to January 17, 2012.

A Good Start

The Navy and its team of consultants took their time in fully explaining their final recommendations. (A copy of the plan can be found on the NFEC Web site at www.nfec1.org) Briefly, the Navy believes that they have removed much of the toxins at the source points. Some lower volatile organic compound (VOC) levels reported from test wells support that belief.

The Navy then said it heard the need to act swiftly and actively remediate the site. So they broke the plan into two halves.

The first half calls for the installation of active remediation wells north of the fenceline on navy property. The design of the pumping stations — which will remove groundwater, clean it and return it to the ground — will accommodate the shifting nature of the toxins as they float through the groundwater. So far, so good.

The second half of the plan is what is troubling. Because much of the area south of the fenceline is County property, past access to sink test wells was limited. This area includes the Peconic River Sportsman's Club with its closed drinking water well, its pond, wetlands and the Peconic River.

So the Navy says not enough is known about this area and the plume below to formulate a viable plan at this time. Unfortunately, increased toxin levels are showing up in this area. And because of the high level of groundwater in the area, the plume shifts as water levels in the river and pond change due to rainfall.

In addition, it's the Navy's belief that current active remediation systems being used above the fenceline would be harmful to the environment in the area south of the fenceline. How so?

A Slow and Weak Finish

The Navy's consultants stated their concerns that current pumping systems if placed near the river would actually lower the water level of the river. And if placed by the wetlands area, these pumps could effectively dry up the wetlands which is a protected ecosystem for the endangered tiger salamander. These are valid concerns.

But the current train of thought is to take at least two years to do additional studies of this area and then take another year to devise a remediation plan. In fact, the Navy believes that if they wait this out, toxin levels will eventually decrease due to natural dilution and dissipation of the VOCs.

Doesn't this sound familiar? In fact, waiting for the VOCs to dilute and dissipate — in other words, do nothing — was how we got to this point...a major, spreading plume affecting the water table, closing down the Sportsman's Club wells.

So while we wait another 3-plus years for a plan and another year for possible active remediation in this area south of the fenceline, the toxins continue spreading to the wetlands and the river, unchecked. This is not acceptable.

Action is Needed by All Parties

The NFEC, like other interested parties, wants active clean-up to start as soon as possible and does not want to delay implementation of the plan north of the fenceline. But more needs to be done south of the fenceline. We urge you to read the Navy's plan and send your comments to the Navy on or before January 17.



Save What's Left!



2012...more programs, more events. So more help is needed.

Join us as a member. Join us as a sponsor. Join us as a volunteer.
Please call the NFEC at 631-298-8880 and join us to fight the good fight to...
"Save What's Left!"



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