Governor Snyder pushes massive frack attack

In a public address last week (November 28), Governor Rick Snyder unveiled his administration's aggressive plan for continued, massive fracking across Michigan. His intent is to make Michigan a leader in natural gas fracking and to allow the rest of the country to benefit from Michigan's fracked natural gas.

His entire address is here.

Regarding fracking, Snyder said this, using the standard industry sales pitches:

> Hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking,” has received increased attention lately. This technology is being used in combination with horizontal drilling to reach some natural gas and other resources that otherwise could not be developed. This innovation is already benefitting Michigan in the form of unusually low natural gas prices and additional money from state leases that goes to our public lands and our parks. But some have expressed concerns about what these technologies mean for Michigan’s environment. Neither fracking nor horizontal drilling is a new technology—they have been used in Michigan for many decades. None of the fracking that has been done in Michigan has resulted in a single water quality problem. In fact, fracking’s deeper wells likely pose less risk to our groundwater than the shallower wells we are more used to. With our water withdrawal statute, as well as our strong regulatory history of natural gas drilling, we are better prepared – more adaptable – than most other states.
>
> That said, it’s important that our citizens understand what fracking is really all about. That’s why the University of Michigan’s Graham Sustainability Institute is undertaking an evaluation of fracking. At their invitation, the state is participating in the steering committee for this effort alongside environmental and industry groups. At the end of the process, the public will have well-reasoned, objective explanations of what this technology is and is not. We will also have a Michigan-focused evaluation of the various implications of fracking. This is a great example of collaboration and a public university serving the needs of the state, and I am looking forward to seeing the results.

Here's some of the press coverage:

Detroit Free Press: Gov. Rick Snyder approves of fracking, if done right

Detroit News: Snyder wants more gas drilling

Michigan.gov website: "Ensuring Michigan's Future [sic]"

The gas industry's trade group, Michigan Oil and Gas Association commented "We believe this project will demonstrate how Michigan is a national model when it comes to regulating hydraulic fracturing and ensuring proper safeguards for keeping water, air and land protected."

The gas industry is sure that the "study" will back them up. We think it will, too.

Frack industry money flows heavily in Michigan

And Governor Snyder is no exception. He's the fifth most funded politician by the gas and oil industry from 2000-2010, according to the report Deep Drilling, Deep Pockets, by Common Cause: (State treasurer Dillon is number 3, attorney general Bill Schuette is number 6, and former governor Granholm and attorney general Cox were pretty well-greased, too).

Figure 13 Michigan's top 20 state-level recipients of fracking industry money

Rank Name Office Party Total 2000-2010

1 MI Republican Party Party R $135,130

2 Andy Dillon State Treasurer D $128,500

3 Jennifer M. Granholm Governor D $98,800

4 Mike Cox Attorney General R $76,250

5 Rick Snyder Governor R $61,900

6 Bill Schuette Attorney General R $59,418

7 Michelle McManus Senate R $51,700

8 Mike Nofs Senate R $49,650

9 Randy Richardville Senate President R $34,500

10 Jason Allen Senate R $31,800

11 Dick Posthumus Governor R $29,150

12 Dick Devos Governor R $28,750

13 Jeff Mayes State Representative D $27,100

14 Bruce Patterson Senate R $26,350

15 Howard Walker Senate R $25,525

16 Terry Lynn Land Secretary of State R $21,050

17 Tony Stamas Senate R $16,875

18 Kathy Angerer Senate D $16,250

19 Rosemary Black Hackett Judge - $16,000

20 John Moolenaar Senate R $15,175

(source: Michigan Common Cause)

Taking Large Volumes of Water from *Waterways*

Another part of Snyder's plan to frack Michigan includes creating a council to "study how users can withdraw large volumes from waterways without doing ecological damage."

"Frackademia" **to the Rescue: U of M Fracking Study**

The studies to be produced by University of Michigan will focus on fracking "best practices" and will be a **collaboration** with the gas industry and groups Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council and Michigan Environmental Council, both of which are already on record as wanting fracking regulated--but not stopped. (See our post earlier this year on how Big Green groups and the gas industry colluded to promote "best practices" at the Critical Path Energy Summit in 2010; MEC's James Clift in *Detroit News* "Pollution concerns, falling natural gas prices slow drilling," May 25, 2012; and Grenetta Thomassey's remarks in Midwest Energy News).

Also on the study's steering committee are "stakeholders" Hal Fitch, the head regulator from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, and another DEQ rep, and two representatives from the industry organization Michigan Oil and Gas Association. The Michigan DEQ, in addition to doling out the well permits to the oil and gas companies, takes in some of the profits from the production of natural gas. The agency is a partner in the industry that they regulate.

With the gas industry, the gas regulators (already in financial partnership with industry), and pro-gas enviro groups collaboratively steering the study, the university is just veneer to give the public the impression of credibility to its findings. It's the same fatally-flawed formula used in New York state with Governor Cuomo's frack panel. Several units at University of Michigan are part of the study, including the Graham Institute for Sustainability, Erb Institute for Global Sustainable Enterprise, Risk Science Center and Energy Institute.

See: Hydraulic Fracturing in Michigan U of M study

This U of M video (below) featuring frack study researcher Brian Ellis is a good indication of where the study is heading. Note the choice of animated graphics describing the fracking process as using water and "detergents" and how professor Ellis states that water, sand, and "additives" go into and out of the frack well. This is the entity that's going to tell the public what fracking is *all* about? The entire exercise is to fine-tune the regulations for continuing fracking.

http://youtu.be/YAgl8qTtotc

It should be noted that MSU is also on board with the gas industry, with MSU Extension's pro-gas leasing "educational" seminars and website, following in Penn State's footsteps.

It's all par for the course

We've been warned by people in other states, that this is the standard recipe for getting fracking underway and widespread throughout a state:

- Rope in a well-respected university or two in studies to come up with regulatory fine-tuning.
- Get a committee or panel of some sort that has the facade of "environmental group" buy-in (and to give the pretense that such groups represent the citizenry), when in fact it's a few, pro-gas groups, to provide the necessary compromises on fracking regulations.
- Retain all the large legal firms.
- Have a lot of "collaboration" with the gas industry itself.
- Make the claim that *this* state will frack better, be safer, be different, has the best regulations.

Cutting through the hype about "best regulations" and regulationism

Regulationism is all about allowing pollution and harm and devastation to happen in the first place--just a matter of how much.

Regulating fracking is not going to prevent the global warming that now puts the entire planet in peril--regulated or unregulated fracking will only hasten it.

Regulating fracking can't prevent the squandering of fresh water, intentionally and permanently poisoning it, and removing it from the natural hydrologic cycle. This is an era of critically diminishing supplies of fresh water in the US and around the world. Great Lakes levels are drastically down and predicted to exceed record lows this winter, due to global warming and drought.

Regulating fracking can't prevent the chemicals, salts, toxic metals and radioactive substances, now loosened and mixed by the fracking process, from becoming a **toxic underground plume** that can work its way into existing fissures as well as into new fractures created by the drilling and fracking. The underground migration of these toxic plumes is unregulatable. (credits to an op-ed by activist Carl Arnold of New York)

And underground injection wells for dumping frack wastes, (Michigan has over 1,000) cannot be regulated to protect us. A recent ProPublica report, Injection Wells: The Poison Beneath Us quoted former EPA underground injection well engineer Mario Salazar:

> "In 10 to 100 years we are going to find out that most of our groundwater is polluted. . . .A lot of people are going to get sick, and a lot of people may die."

This is a serious assault on our state. We will no longer recognize it once the gas industry has wreaked its havoc on our health, our land, our water, our air and climate.