

Bans on Horizontal Fracking

An extensive study of fracking commissioned by the European Union [revealed](#), “Risks of surface and ground water contamination, water resource depletion, air and noise emissions, land take, disturbance to biodiversity and impacts related to traffic are deemed to be high in the case of cumulative projects.” The 292-page study recommended that no fracking be allowed near areas where water is used for drinking.

Because of significant questions about health and pollution issues related to fracking, several countries have banned the use of fracking. Bulgaria [*See: Photo I-16*], France, Germany, and Ireland have banned all fracking operations. The Czech government is seriously considering a ban. In April 2011, South Africa [banned](#) Shell Oil from using fracking to extract natural gas in the Karoo Desert. “[F]racking fluid *will* contaminate the groundwater. There is not doubt at all,” [said](#) Dr. Gerrit van Tonder of South Africa’s Institute for Groundwater Studies at University of the Free State. However, in September 2012, the South African government [lifted](#) that moratorium on exploration following a study that correlated safe extraction with the reality that the country has about 485 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, most of it in the Karoo Desert, and drilling would boost economic recovery and lower oil dependency.

Almost two-thirds of Canadians oppose fracking, according to a [poll](#) conducted in January 2012 by Environics Research. Canada’s National Farmers Union (NFU) also called for a moratorium. Jan Slomp, coordinator for the NFU in Alberta, [told](#) the media, “We are in the heart of Alberta’s oil and gas industry where our ability to produce good, wholesome food is at risk of being compromised by the widespread, virtually unregulated use of this dangerous process.” Quebec, British Columbia, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia have also banned fracking pending full studies.

In the United States, New Jersey and New York state placed moratoriums on well permits while they evaluate the health and environmental risks. The New Jersey legislature also banned disposal of fracking wastewater, targeting the possibility that companies operating in Pennsylvania would transport much of the wastewater from the eastern part of the state to New Jersey. However, Gov. Chris Christie vetoed it.

The New York moratorium began in 2008; the ban was extended until July 1, 2011, following majority votes in the state senate and assembly. Signing the legislation in December 2010, Gov. David Patterson [said](#) New York “would not risk public safety or water quality.” The ban was continued under the administration of Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

Vermont banned fracking, but the action by the legislature and Gov. Peter Shumlin is symbolic since Vermont has no deep earth natural gas deposits. Nevertheless, the natural gas industry lobbied against the proposed legislation and then spoke out after the legislature passed it. In a [prepared statement](#) to Reuters, Rolf Hanson of the American Petroleum Institute said the Legislature’s action “follows an irresponsible path that ignores three major needs: jobs, government revenue and energy security.” Gov. Bev Perdue (D-N.C.), a supporter of fracking and natural gas development, vetoed a Republican-sponsored bill in July 2012 that would have removed that state’s ban on fracking. “Our drinking water and the health and safety of North Carolina’s families are too important [and] we can’t put them in jeopardy by rushing to allow fracking without proper safeguards,” [said](#) Gov. Perdue in announcing her veto.

Gov. Martin O’Malley (D-Md.) issued an executive order to delay drilling in Maryland until a special commission determined fracking could be conducted safely. However, oil and gas energy lobbyists have apparently influenced enough members of the legislature that it has refused to fund that study. A resolution endorsed by several Maryland environmental, political, and civic organizations urges that “This statutory moratorium should only be permitted to expire if and when detailed and transparent studies prove that fracking activities will not

cause harm to our public health, rural communities, natural environment, and global climate.” Gov. O’Malley’s moratorium expires in January 2015, the end of his term.

Dozens of cities throughout the United States have enacted bans or moratoriums on natural gas drilling within their city limits, usually citing health and environmental concerns for their actions.

In December 2009, New York City asked the state to ban all natural gas drilling in the watershed. Fracking presents “unacceptable threats to the unfiltered fresh water supply of nine million New Yorkers,” said Steven Lawitts, commissioner of the city’s Department of Environmental Protection. Mayor Michael Bloomberg agreed; a representative of the mayor [told Reuters](#), “Based on all the facts, the risks are too great and drilling simply cannot be permitted in the watershed.”

By a 9–0 vote of the city council in In November 2010, Pittsburgh became the first Pennsylvania city to ban natural gas drilling. [The Council cited health concerns](#) as its reason to ban drilling. City Councilman Doug Shields, calling the industry “arrogant,” said it placed profits ahead of citizen health and the environment. Council president Darlene Harris, responding to industry claims it would bring jobs to the region, was brutally honest—“They’re bringing jobs all right. There’s going to be a lot of jobs for funeral homes and hospitals. That’s where the jobs are. Is it worth it?”

Two months after the Pittsburgh city council voted to ban fracking, the city council of Philadelphia, the state’s largest city, [voted to ban](#) all fracking in the Delaware River Basin.