

Natural Gas Fracturing

All natural gas production, including deep shale gas, should be governed by a robust and effective regulatory structure; all gas should be produced using rigorous best management practices to limit environmental damage.

The Club opposes all coalbed methane extraction because it poses unacceptable risks to water quality in shallow aquifers. The following provisions apply to deep shale gas:

First, the Sierra Club opposes frac'ing projects if the identity and volume of frac'ing fluids are not fully disclosed to the public.

Second, the Club opposes any projects using frac'ing fluids that pose unacceptable toxic risks.

Third, the Club opposes any projects that do not properly treat, manage, and account for frac'ing fluids, drilling muds, and produced water. Frac'ing should not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that drinking water aquifers and surface waters are adequately protected from contamination.

Fourth, the Club opposes frac'ing projects that would endanger water supplies or critical watersheds, seriously damage important wildland resources, significantly increase habitat fragmentation, imperil human health, or otherwise violate the Club's land conservation policies.

Fifth, the Club opposes any frac'ing projects that would cause violations of air quality standards, individually or cumulatively.

Finally, as the industry matures, a series of best management practices will emerge, some already identified, some evolving with time. These best management practices should, to the maximum extent possible, be swiftly incorporated into regulatory requirements as they are developed. The Club opposes any unconventional or conventional drilling projects that do not comply with best management practices, even in regions where state or federal law may permit lower standards of environmental management.

The Club will use these standards as a yardstick for any regulatory reform efforts it undertakes or supports, and to judge which new drilling projects, if any, cause unacceptable environmental damage and warrant opposition.

Chapters are encouraged to press for effective regulatory frameworks to control the impacts of deep shale gas and may oppose specific projects that are inappropriately sited or that fail to comply with best management practices.

Board of Directors, December 21, 2009