

Fracking: Legislative Review Period & Citizens' Right to Know

Fracking is risky. Maryland legislators and citizens deserve to fully understand those risks before any decision is made whether to allow fracking here, and legislators should be the ones to make that decision.

Untapped Basin Under Maryland to See Fracking?

A Dallas-based company, Shore Exploration and Production Corporation, has been securing leases on 80,000 acres of land in Virginia over the Taylorsville basin, in the hopes of fracking there within 18 months. The Taylorsville also covers much of Charles County and southern Prince George's and extends up to Annapolis. While the Marcellus Shale in western Maryland has attracted most of the attention in recent years, the Taylorsville is one of four other basins underlying Maryland where fracking could potentially occur.

Fracking's Many Risks

Fracking has been directly linked in other states to a host of harmful effects including contaminated streams and rivers, flammable tap water, forest fragmentation, increased smog and greenhouse gas emissions.

Insufficient Protections in Maryland

Gov. O'Malley issued an Executive Order (EO) in 2011 directing a new commission to produce studies in order to determine whether and how fracking could occur in Maryland "without unacceptable risks" to public health and the environment.

The legislature has appropriated some funds proposed by Gov. O'Malley for these studies. However, **the studies face tight completion schedules and budgetary constraints**, particularly crucial studies of water resources, health and economic impacts, and a study examining to what extent regulations can mitigate certain high-risk activities. **The commission's final report is due in August 2014.**

2014 Legislative Session: Last Chance for the General Assembly

While the 2011 EO was a prudent action to take, it does not afford Marylanders statutory protections from fracking. Moreover, with the commission's final report due in August 2014, the decision on whether to frack could potentially be made shortly thereafter. That's why **the 2014 session is legislators' last chance to have a voice in this process.**

The priority fracking legislation in 2014 will provide legislators and the public more time to make an informed decision. The bill will **temporarily prevent state agencies from issuing fracking permits in Maryland until these straightforward criteria are met:**

- 1) The studies required by the EO must be completed, and a human and environmental risk assessment must be released at the same time the studies are released.
- 2) Eighteen months must have passed since the completion of the studies, during which time drilling companies may not begin baseline testing (part of the process of securing a permit).
- 3) The Department of the Environment must have adopted fracking regulations that are at least as protective of public health and the environment as determined by the risk assessment and the studies.

For more information, please contact:

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