

Fracking fears are overblown; industry working to assuage them

BY BILL DAUGHERTY

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There has been a lot of heated rhetoric about fracking in Madison County. A community discussion on important issues is always a good thing. But it should be based on facts.

In my 30-year career in the oil and gas industry, I have fracked over 1,000 wells in Kentucky and hundreds more in West Virginia, Virginia and Ohio. Stringent regulations govern Kentucky's oil and gas industry. Significant precautions are taken to prevent spills and protect groundwater.

The oil and gas industry is subject to the Environmental Protection Agency, the federal Clean Water Act and Clean Air Act as well as numerous state regulations from the Kentucky Division of Oil and Gas, the Kentucky Division of Water and the Kentucky Division of Air Quality.

I can point to countless studies that prove hydraulic fracturing doesn't create the environmental calamities industry opponents claim. A study by the U.S. Department of Energy's National Energy Technology Lab found there was no migration of methane from fractured wells into freshwater aquifers.

Just last September, the New York Times, reporting on a National Academy of Sciences study, wrote "researchers found no evidence that fractured shale led to water contamination."

Can Kentucky strengthen its regulations on the oil-and-gas industry in light of new drilling technologies? Yes, and it should.

That's why the oil and gas industry has been collaborating for several months with state regulators, the Kentucky Resources Council, the Environmental Quality Commission, the Kentucky Farm Bureau and the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce to propose new laws governing the industry.

I have been part of this working group and a broad package of consensus reforms will be introduced in this session of the Kentucky General Assembly to fill gaps in the current regulatory framework.

Kentucky's oil and gas industry contributes \$1 billion to the state's economy. We provide 3,200 jobs and generate over \$40 million in tax revenues to the state general fund and local government budgets.

More important, we put money into the pockets of everyday Kentuckians. Landowners who partner with the industry to develop their minerals get a royalty payment.

These royalty payments provide income for family budgets, help put children through school and support seniors in retirement.

Do fracking opponents intend to deny this income opportunity to Kentuckians who don't share their opposition to oil and gas development? If so, they should admit it and defend their position.

For those who want to get the facts, I recommend checking out the websites of the Ground Water Protection Council (Gwpc.org) and the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission (logcc.publishpath.com).

I graduated from Berea College and lived in the Berea area for 16 years. Berea and its surrounding area are one of Kentucky's treasures.

The community deserves a fair presentation of the facts related to oil and gas development and a discussion beyond the mere generation of fears based upon unsupported statements.

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LINK TO STORY: <http://www.kentucky.com/2015/02/16/3697044/fracking-fears-are-overblown-industry.html>