

From the front page

Anti-fracking group takes its message on the road

Yellow Springs-based group has traveled to Texas to oppose action.

By Brandon Smith-Hebson
Staff Writer

YELLOW SPRINGS — An anti-fracking group centered in Yellow Springs has taken its message on the road — to eastern Ohio to join protests and to Texas to speak at conferences.

“There are costs here that aren’t taken into account, that are higher than the money that will be made,” said Joseph Cronin, a professor at Antioch University Midwest and a member of the group that includes academics, mothers and retirees.

Using advanced drilling techniques that emerged a decade ago, called hydraulic fracturing or fracking, gas companies have new access to deposits a mile or more deep with oil and gas that some suggest could rival the amount of crude in the Middle East.

One massive deposit, called the Utica Shale, covers a swath of Appalachia and extends into eastern and central Ohio.

Two gas leases have been signed in Greene County this year, but they include no-fracking clauses.

A shale gas exploration company, West Bay Exploration, found “promising” results when testing in northern Greene County this year, but locals said West Bay hasn’t returned.



Joseph Cronin (left), Tricia Tallman and Peggy Koebernick talk at a Dec. 13 meeting in Yellow Springs about how best to reach local lawmakers and the public with their anti-fracking message. STAFF PHOTO BY BRANDON SMITH-HEBSON

No leases have been signed in Montgomery or Clark counties in recent years.

“There is natural capital, and not all of it is privately owned,” Cronin said. “If you look at the Miami Aquifer, it’s under the entire region. We could poison the entire aquifer, which is not privately owned, nor should it be. Can a company afford to pay the cost of cleaning up our aquifer?

Should we allow companies to threaten its health and safety? Or, should we regulate potential poisoners?”

Cronin developed his university’s program for studying sustainability, something he said is at the root of conservatism — ensuring future generations get a fair shake.

Fracking’s proponents have said that proper safety precau-

tions are followed.

Gov. John Kasich is among them.

“It’s the right thing to do to protect the environment of our state,” Kasich told the AP this month. “If you did this irresponsibly, you would pay the price and in the end would wind up losing the jobs you’re trying to create.”

Detractors like the group in Yellow Springs cite a recent EPA

study and documentaries like “Gasland,” both of which highlight damage to air and water quality — and thus quality of life for those nearby — that’s possible with fracking.

The quintessential image of the movement is a homeowner lighting his tap water on fire.

The Yellow Springs group suggests the government is too cozy with the industry it’s trying to regulate.

As for the need for jobs in the region, the activists say renewable energy can be just as potent as natural gas but with fewer potential downsides.

Hennessy’s group calls itself “Gas and Oil Drilling Awareness and Education,” though it’s thinking of changing that.

It regularly posts to a Facebook page, and is loosely affiliated with the Green Environmental Coalition, which maintains greenlink.org.

The group has set local lawmakers as its next target. Cities and counties in Ohio and elsewhere are increasingly finding they can’t prevent companies from fracking within their borders if the companies persuade landowners to sign leases.

Some municipalities have fought back by passing ordinances against structures over a certain height, or excess truck traffic or noise.

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