

Common Ground Convention



Project by:
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MFA 2014
Design for Social Innovation
New York City, NY



One day, we saw tall metal fences around the lot, blocking our entry-way. But we rode around on our bikes until we found a way in. However, in a matter of time, the fences barricaded the land and we were locked out. ”

“

I grew up in Jakarta, Indonesia during a time of rapid development. As a kid, my friends and I would play in a huge abandoned plot of land, which we nicknamed our “common backyard”.





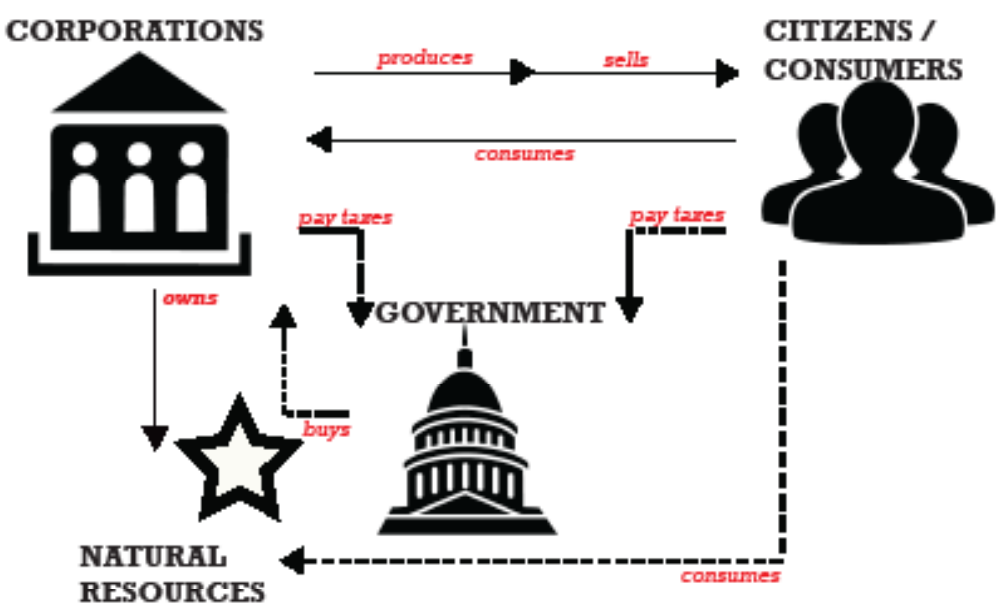
The Commons Definition:

- resources over which no one has private property rights or exclusive control. ¹
- They have clear defined boundaries. ²
- People must be able to develop rules for management. ²
- Have a system to monitor use of resource. ²
- Must identify and punish people who violate the rules. ²

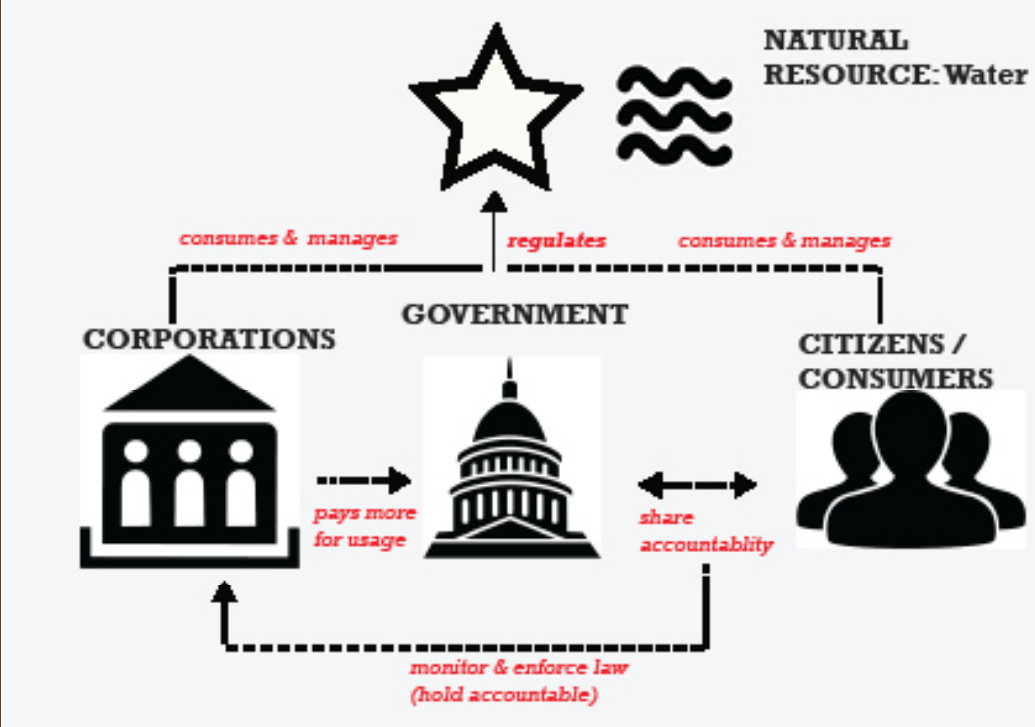
“ The economic market operates like a runaway truck. It has no internal mechanism telling it when to stop - stop depleting the commons that sustain it. To put it another way, we’ve been living off a fat commons bank account for centuries and now it’s running low. We must start making some deposits so we’ll have something for tomorrow.”

**- Peter Barnes,
On The Commons**

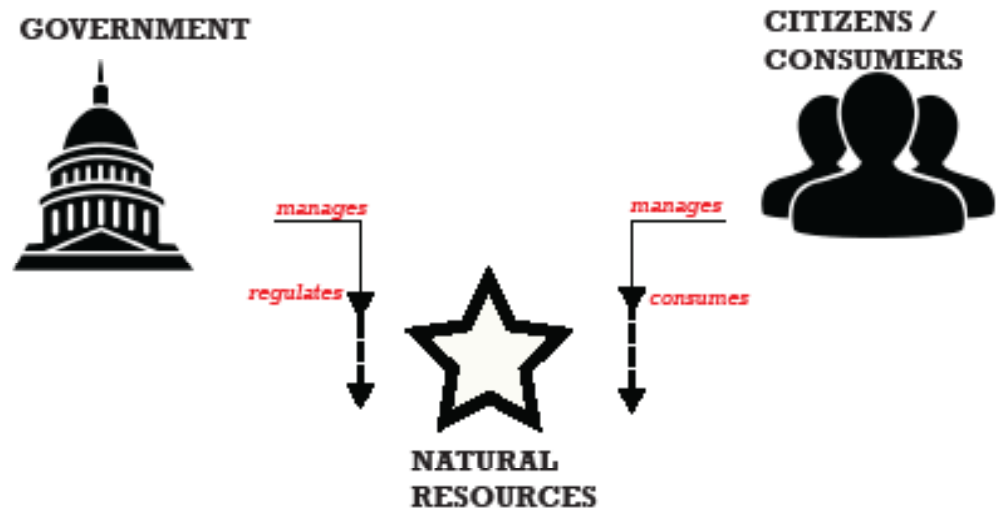
PRIVATE GOODS



COMMONS MANAGEMENT



PUBLIC GOODS



Forms:

- Trusts
- Cooperatives
- Community-owned
- Public-public partnerships
- Local management (bottom-up)

Example 1

Avari River Parliament Rajasthan, India:

Due to low rainfall and excessive logging there was a drought which led to tribal leaders reviving traditional water harvesting systems to solve the water problems in the area.

The Parliament has two representatives each from 72 villages who have framed rules with regard to the use of the river waters. ³

Though it has no legal status, the moral force of the people makes its survival possible. ³



Source

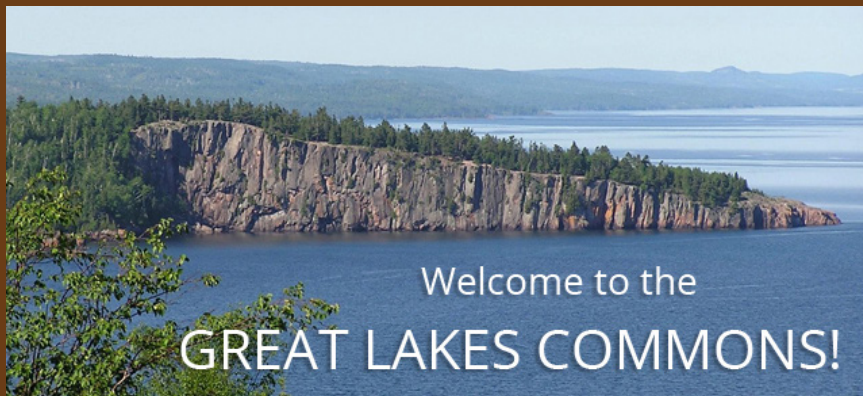
³ Community Water Management - Right To Water,
[http://www.righttowater.info/rights-in-practice/rights-based-approach-for-practitioners/
community-water-management-the-story-of-the-arvari-river-parliament-india/](http://www.righttowater.info/rights-in-practice/rights-based-approach-for-practitioners/community-water-management-the-story-of-the-arvari-river-parliament-india/)

Example 2

The Great Lakes Charter, Mid-West America:

Working to establish trainings within communities in various sectors such as the public health and faith circles to be actively involved in the decision-making around water policies as the area is a 'water hub' for America.

On a local level, they work on projects such as building a green-way along the Milwaukee River. ⁴



Source
⁴ Interview with Ann Brummitt, Co-Founder of Social Charter for The Great Lakes

Example 3

Elektrizitätswerke Schönau (EWS) Schönau, Germany:



The town decided to buy their local nuclear plant and turn it into a cooperative power themselves with solar and wind energy and sell the excess to the national grid. ^{5, 6}


Source
⁵ Appleseed Energy,
<http://www.appleseedenergy.com/germany.htm>
⁶ Powerplay: Documentary film,
<http://www.sbs.com.au/dateline/story/transcript/id/601443/n/Power-Play>

“

*Curious about these forms of management, I realized that beyond the different forms of governing and managing resources, it was a **mind-set** that needed to shift in our capitalist system.*

So I talked to people in the farmers' market in New York City about their understanding of their shared resources in the city starting with food and water. Most people didn't seem to care how the food was grown or managed and they would pay for anything that was 'fresh'.

”



“ ‘commonifying’ our minds begins with inquiry about the nature of the relationships we want with one another and our commons.”

- On The Commons

Source: Ruchika Muchhala

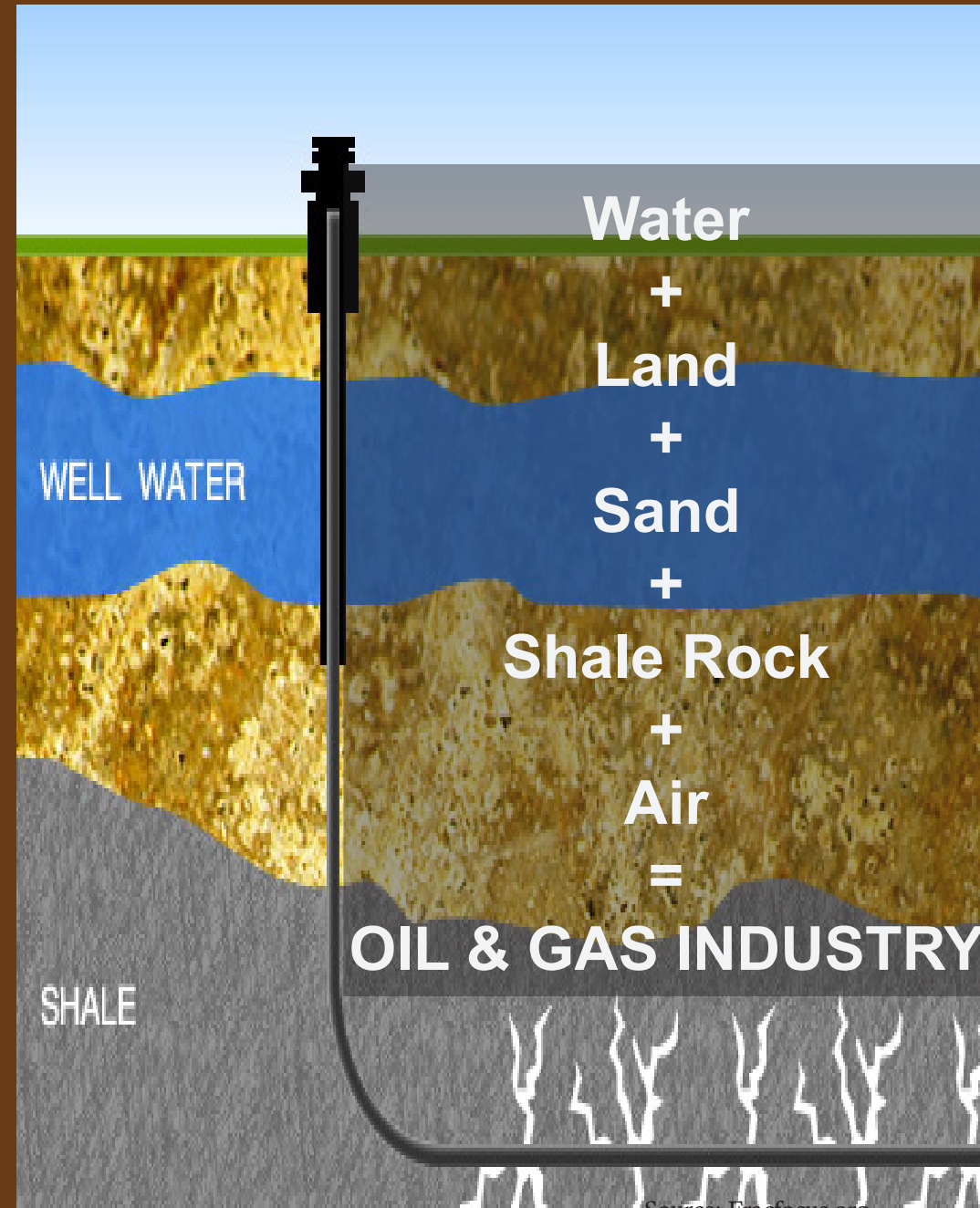
“

I needed to dig deeper.

For the commons to be embraced, their immediacy should be apparent to everyone. 7

Researching issues close to home, here in New York, I came across this systems map in which multiple levels of natural resource commons were necessary in the process of drilling for gas & oil.

”



Source
7 Interview with Alexa Bradley, On The Commons

THE ISSUE: FRACKING

“ Thanks in part to our all-of-the-above strategy for American energy, for the first time in nearly two decades, we produce more oil here at home than we buy from the rest of the world” ⁸

- Barack Obama, Jan. 18, 2014



Source: Politico Magazine

Source

⁸ “Barack Obama says U.S. generates ‘more natural gas than anybody’ ”

<http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2014/jan/22/barack-obama/barack-obama-says-we-generate-more-natural-gas-any/>

Economy:

- Gas price projections are lower due to an expanded shale gas resource base. ⁹

Social:

- 600,000 jobs created within the industry. ¹¹
- Pennsylvania fracking jobs pay on average \$62,000, which is around \$20,000 higher than the state average. ¹¹

Environment:

- The combustion of natural gas emits significantly lower levels of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and sulfur dioxide than does the combustion of coal or oil. ¹⁰

Source

⁹ “Why is Shale Gas Important?”, U.S Energy Information Administration website

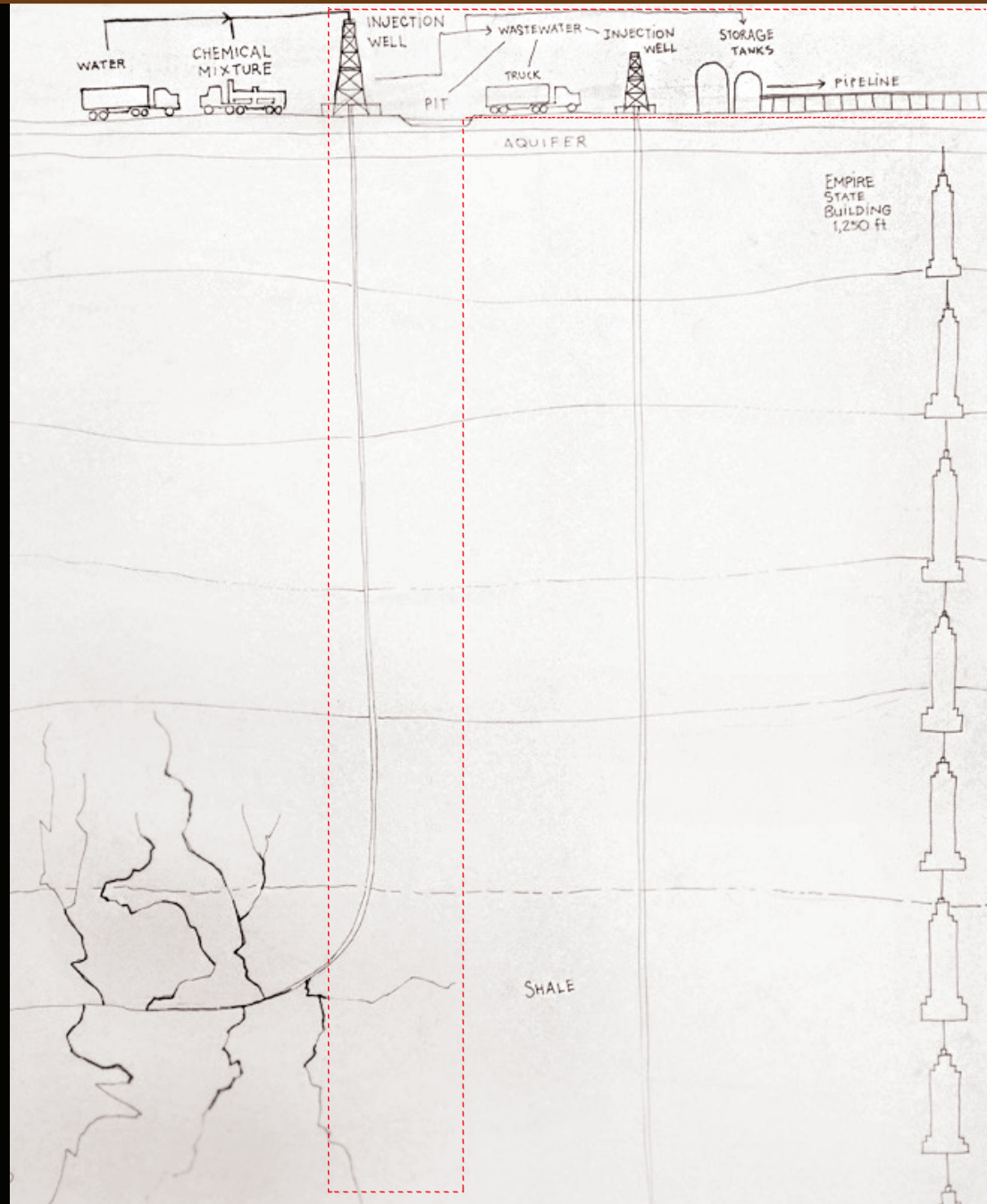
¹⁰ “New York & PA Comparision Report”, The Manhattan Institute

¹¹ Fracking in Pennsylvania, <http://www.pennsylvaniafracking.com/>

HYDRAULIC GAS DRILLING PROCESS

- 1: Millions of Gallons of Fresh Water
- 2: Mixed with called "Fracking Fluid"
- 3: Drilled to create "fractures"
- 4: Gas and oil extraction

7000 ft



“ The process is clear cut, and it seems to be benefiting the economy, but why is there so much speculation?

Upon watching the anti-fracking documentary film, “Gasland” and speaking to activists and community organizers, I began to understand how deep the issue was - beyond the debate.

This term “mini-earthquakes” was not just the explanation of what was happening 7000 feet underground, but was symbolic of the larger problem the industry had caused in our communities. ”



ISSUE 1: Federal Laws

2005 ENERGY POLICY ACT OF U.S.A

EXEMPTION

The Clean Water Act of 1972

EXEMPTION

The Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974

EXEMPTION

The Clean Air Act of 1970

ISSUE 2: Infrastructure Safety PIPELINES

- Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Administration (PHMSA): *“very few tools to work with”* in enforcing safety rules even after Congress in 2011 allowed it to impose higher fines on companies that cause major accidents. ¹²
- 99% of pipelines get approved by Federal Energy Regulation Commission (FERC) ¹³

Source

¹² “FERC Approves \$2.45 Billion Expansion in FL”, Pipeline & Gas Journal Website
<http://www.pipelineandgasjournal.com/ferc-approves-245-billion-florida-pipeline-expansion>

¹³ Interview with Corine Rosen, Food & Water Watch Organization

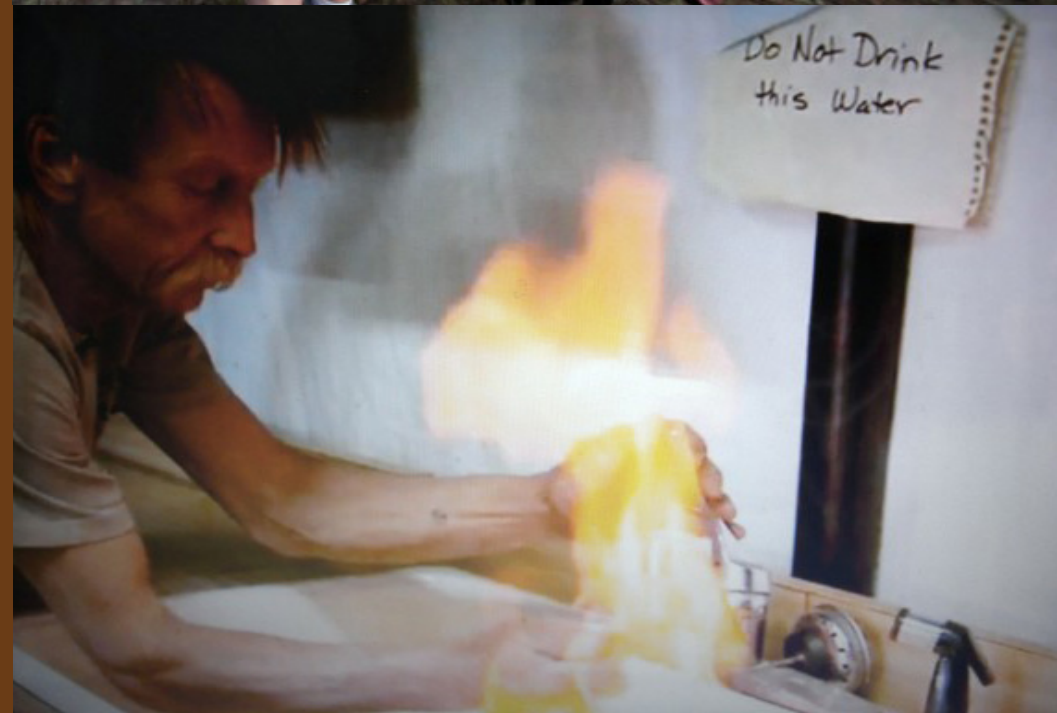


Source: No Fracking USA Website

ISSUE 3: Public Safety

HEALTH ISSUES

- Upto 40% of groundwater is contaminated by spills due to pipeline accidents, causing contamination to the well water supply. ¹⁴
- High levels of toxic chemicals, including Radon are emitted by the gas supply. ¹⁵
- Drinking water is affected with high levels of methane, butane and propane. ¹⁵
- Animals and people have suffered from breathing disorders, skin rashes and other issues due to contaminated water. ¹⁶



Source

¹⁴ New Yorkers Against Fracking website

¹⁵ "Potential Health & Environmental Effects: Case Studies", Carleton University

http://serc.carleton.edu/NAGTWorkshops/health/case_studies/hydrofracking_w.html

¹⁶ "Gasland" Documentary, Dir: Josh Fox, 2010

Source: Wilder Utopia Website

The Government tries to enforce regulations, but it is clear that there are issues with the Obama administration:

- **2012:**

Obama passed a rule which required Oil & Gas companies to expose the ingredients of the fracking fluid concoction that has been top secret as ‘proprietary ingredients’.

However, instead of revealing it beforehand, they were allowed to reveal the long list of toxic ingredients after they started drilling. ⁸

- **2013:**

Obama’s Administration takes a step even further backwards and relaxes the rule by allowing Oil & Gas companies to keep information hidden by calling them “Trade secrets”. And rather than using a government website to provide information, they are allowed to disclose information on FracFocus, an industry-funded website which restricts access to data and is not subject to freedom of information requirements. ¹⁷

“Both advocates of drilling and environmentalists have criticized Obama, either for being too cautious about promoting natural gas development or being too eager to support it.”⁸

Source

⁸ “Barack Obama says U.S. Generates...”, Politifact Journal

¹⁷ “Obama Administration Caves to Fracking”,

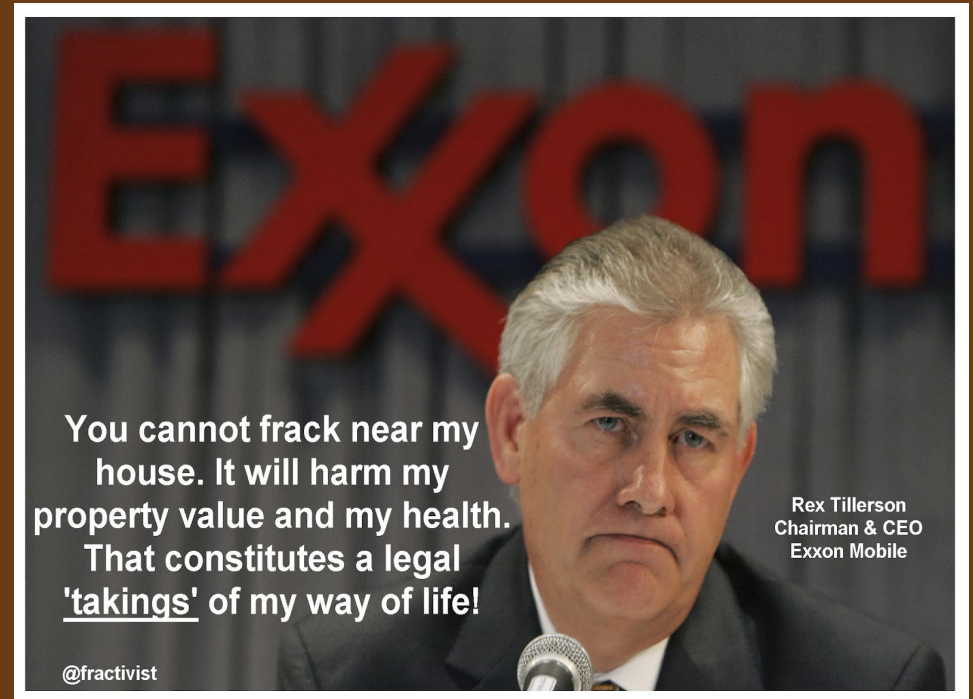
Natural Resource Defense Council Switchboard Website

“No fracking in my backyard!”

And yet, even the CEO of one of America’s largest Oil & Gas companies, Exxon-Mobile, Rex Tillerson, doesn’t want fracking in his backyard.¹⁸

In 2014, he joined a lawsuit to stop the construction of a water tower near his estate in Texas. That water would be used in fracking. He stated that his reasons aren’t environmental, but cultural:

“I don’t want the noise, traffic, or heavy trucks to disturb my horses or lower my property value.”



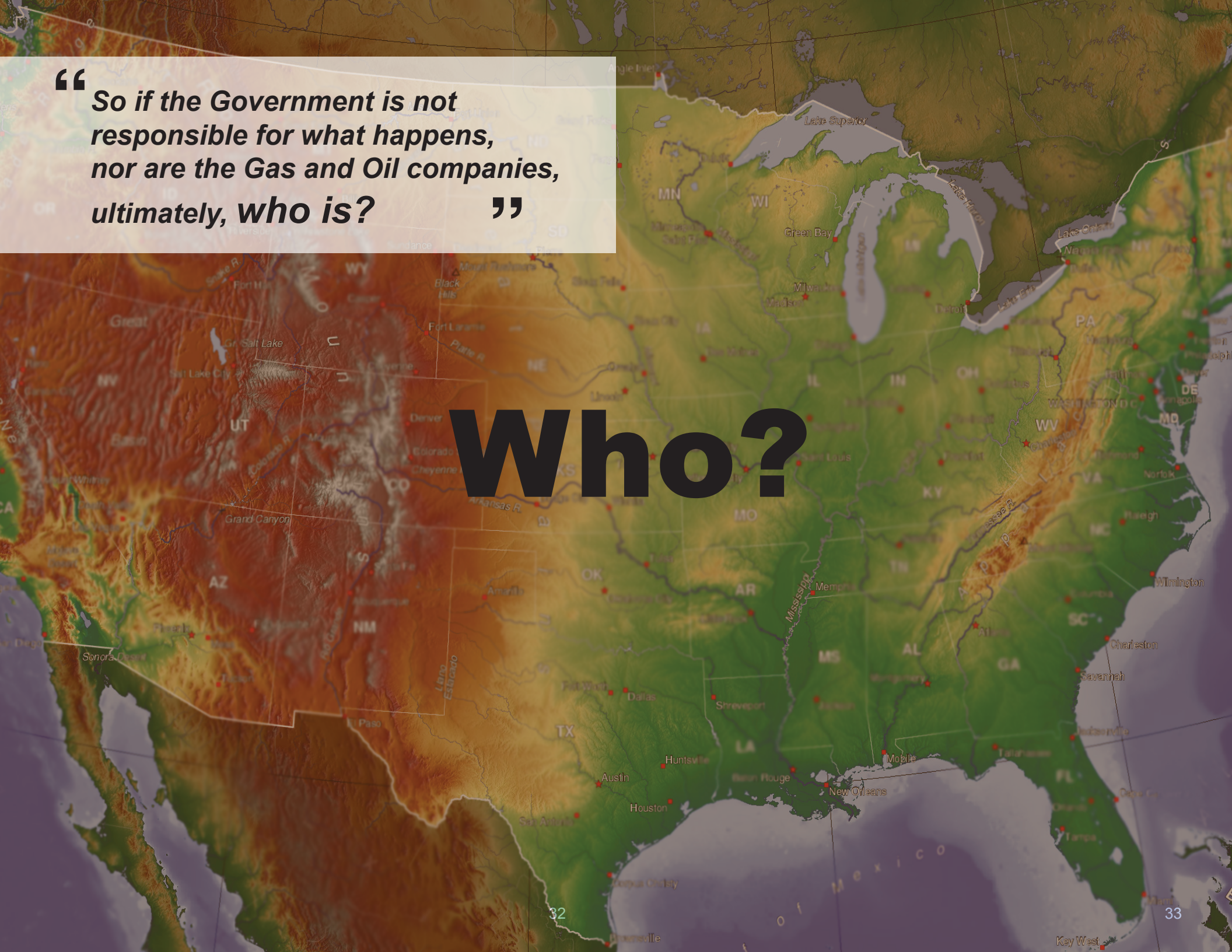
Rex Tillerson
Chairman & CEO
Exxon Mobile

Source

¹⁸ “Exxon Mobile CEO Doesn’t want Fracking in his Backyard”, Texas Monthly Journal, <http://www.texasmonthly.com/daily-post/exxonmobile-ceo-doesnt-want-fracking-operation-near-his-backyard>

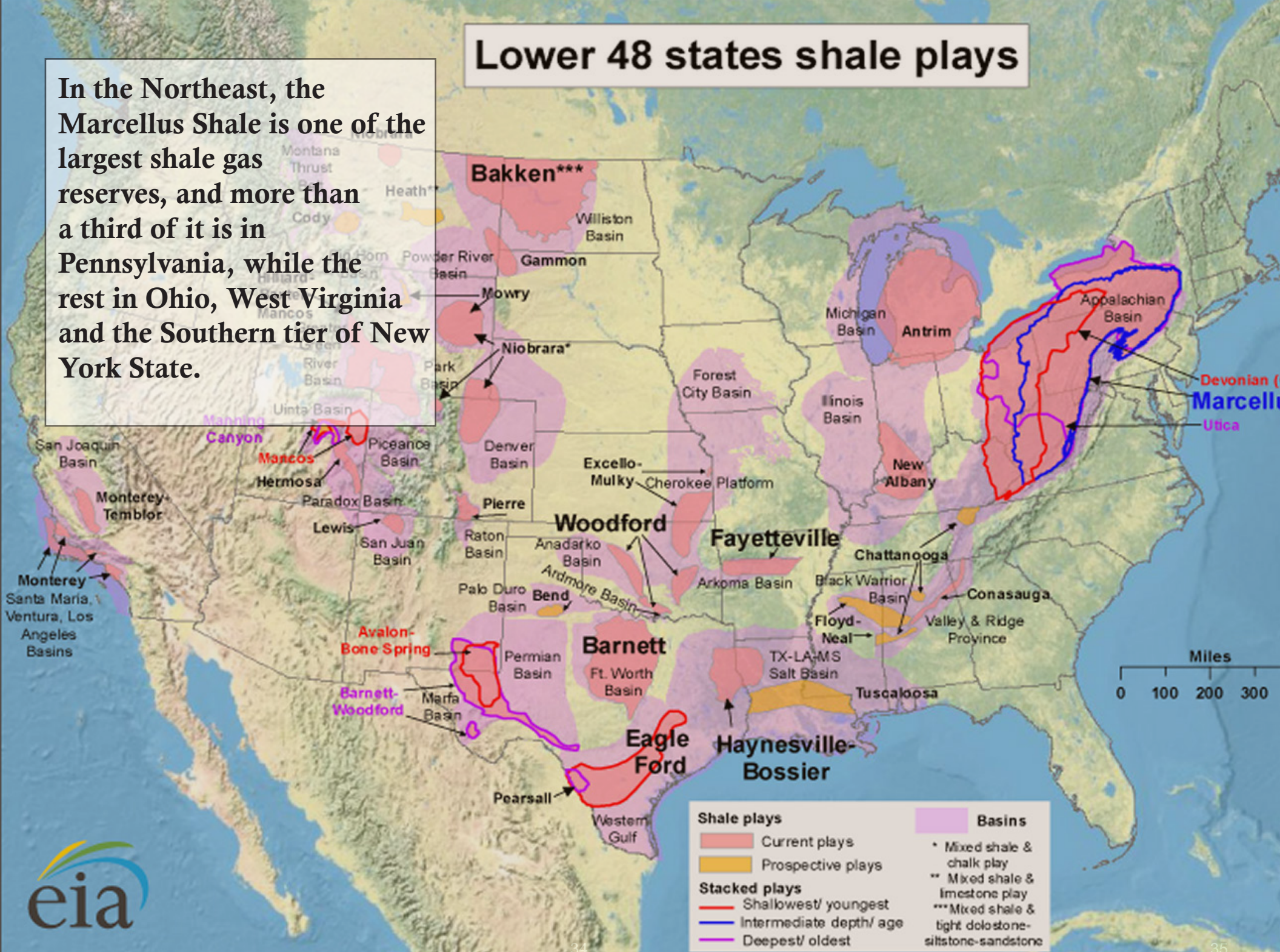
“ So if the Government is not responsible for what happens, nor are the Gas and Oil companies, ultimately, who is? ”

Who?



Lower 48 states shale plays

In the Northeast, the Marcellus Shale is one of the largest shale gas reserves, and more than a third of it is in Pennsylvania, while the rest in Ohio, West Virginia and the Southern tier of New York State.



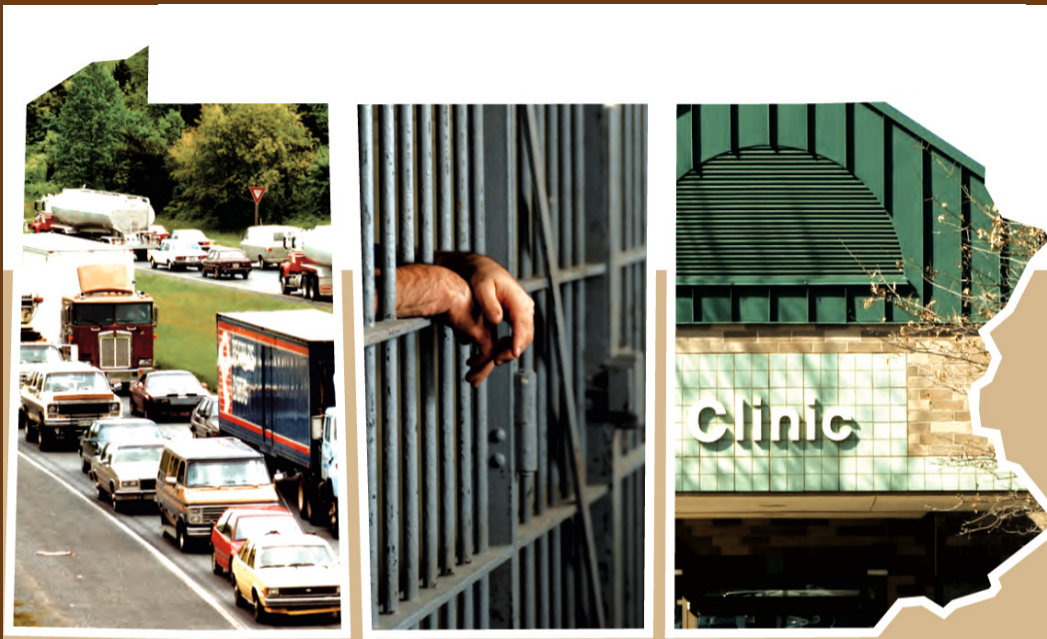
When fracking boomed in 2005, there were 8 wells in Pennsylvania.

Within 5 years, there were a 250% increase, and a total of 1952 wells which caused these social consequences: ¹⁹

- Increased traffic delaying Emergency vehicles
- 'Heavy-truck' crashes increased 7% in heavily fracked rural PA
- Drunken-driving, traffic violations & bar fights
- 17% increase in Disorderly conduct arrests
- 62% increase in Chlamydia & Gonorrhea cases


“In a modern-day echo of the raucous Old West, small towns enjoying a boom in oil & gas drilling are seeing a sharp increase in drunken diving, bar fights and other hell-raising, blamed largely on an influx of young men who find themselves with lots of money in their pockets and nothing to do after they get off work.”

- The Associated Press



Source

¹⁹ “The Social Costs of Fracking: A Pennsylvania Case Study” Report by Food & Water Watch, September 2013



**“ Who were the people in Pennsylvania whose land was drilled on, or water supply was contaminated?
In this wild wild west scenario, where everything happened so fast,
I wanted to hear from people themselves and understand what was going on. ”**

Susquehanna County, one of the poorest areas of Pennsylvania had it's first gas wells built in 2009.

The Landmen from the Gas company would come in white vans to each family home, and make individual deals with them, causing tension and stress in the community. And as a consequence, trust was broken in the community.





The Abbotts

Brothers Mike and Stanley Abbott are second-generation farmers who are struggling to make ends meet. They live in houses next to each other with their wives and children. The oldest son, Stanley takes care of their mother, the matriarch of the family, who is a painter. Her paintings account the story of the land and their town.

[Stanley]: Farming has always been a struggle. We only own 325 acres, but it is still ours.

[Mike]: We held out for a good year when they first came and they were giving \$25 for an acre. And then we held out for a year and got \$50 and then after that it just boomed!

[Stanley]: Because the price of milk was down and we didn't have any way to keep the farm going so we signed at \$50 so we could buy fuel and tractors and feed the cows.

[Mike]: Last two checks we got from Cabot from the lease, have basically gone for fuel and parts. They've come here 4-5 times to tell us they are putting a well on us and then they yank it up under you – that's not right. I mean, if you are not going to have it written up in paper, then they shouldn't be going around telling anyone anything.

[Stanley]: So they won't even tell

us how much of our farm is in the unit. We have no idea – none. Nobody has been here to talk to us about anything.

[Mike]: Everything is a big secret. They can't even give you a general idea. If they didn't come test our water, we probably – until we saw that light up there, we wouldn't have known they were doing anything.

[Mom]: We wish that Cabot would come and tell us – something good!

[Mike]: They have enough departments down there, somebody should be able to come around and talk to you just to let you know what they are doing. Send a paper around.

[Mom]: They say they want to be a part of the community, but they are not. They will not tell us anything.

We would save three paychecks and live on one until we got a down payment - that's how this farm started. Saved every penny we could and used the barn for just six months when the whole barn burned in 1972. I can still remember the boys standing in the upstairs window, screaming while looking at the barn on fire. We lost a 100 cattle... we had \$25,000 fire insurance and that was it.

[Mike]: He built a barn, and then by the time he got done paying the insurance – we started off with a \$200,000 loss.

[Stanley]: All the money is invested in this farm. I don't think any of us have savings as far as I know - it's all invested in this farm to keep it going. And hopefully the Cabot thing will pay it back.

[Mike]: We are glad we never sold it. We listed some but nobody bought it before the gas companies came around.

And now they want to buy everything. A couple called me last week and was like remember when you were going to sell that property? And I'm like na, not selling that now.

[Stanley]: They thought we were suppose to pay taxes on it all these years and then hand it over to them so that they can make the gas royalties off of it – I don't think so.

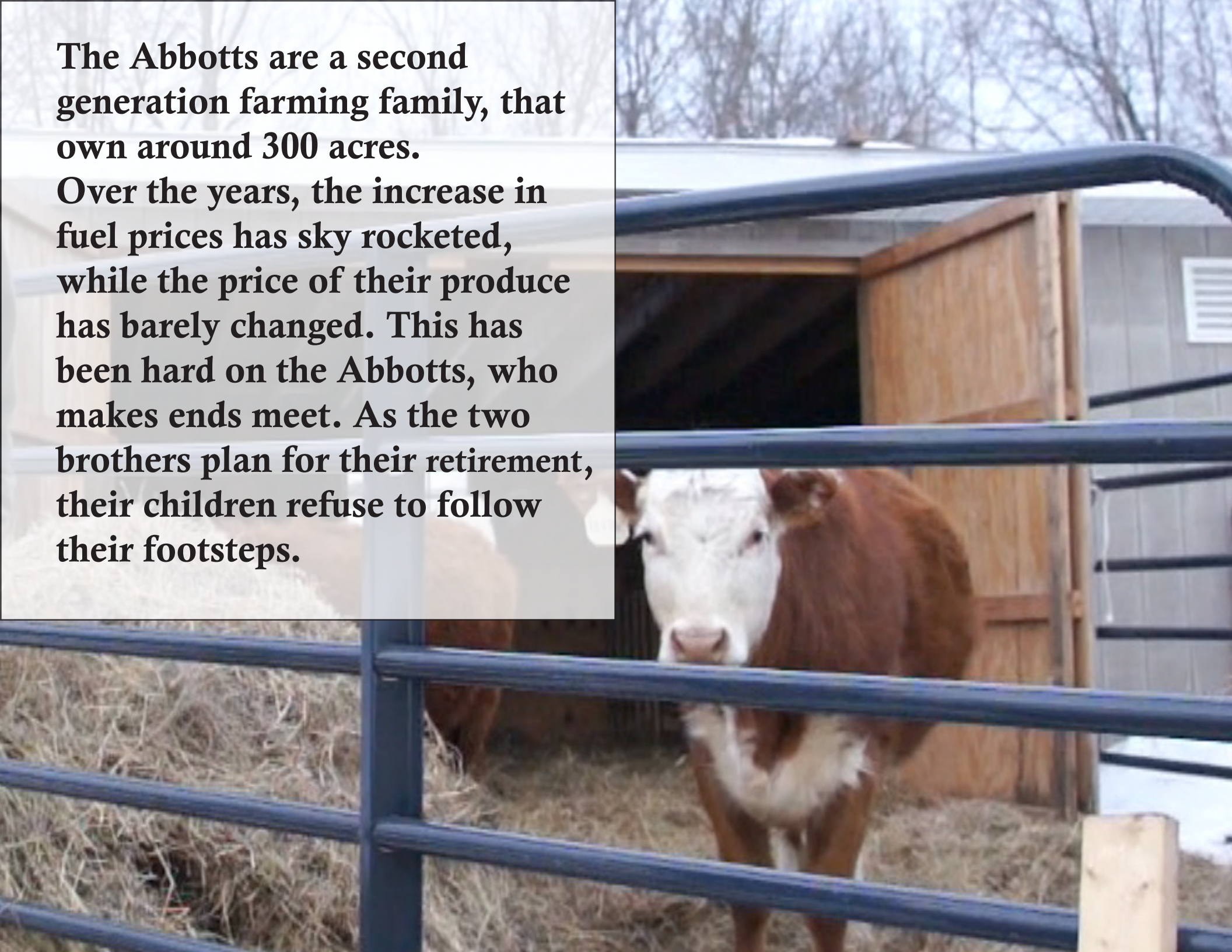
[Mike]: I hope we don't have any water problems, that's the biggest worry we have with all

these animals – is water problems. We had our water tested before they started drilling so in case something happens, they have to come back and take care of it.

Everything scares you. But you are not going to find out till it's done so you just pray and hope that everything works out for the best. There's nothing worse than farming, it can't get any worse than that – literally!

The Abbotts are a second generation farming family, that own around 300 acres.

Over the years, the increase in fuel prices has sky rocketed, while the price of their produce has barely changed. This has been hard on the Abbotts, who makes ends meet. As the two brothers plan for their retirement, their children refuse to follow their footsteps.





Matt & Tammy Manning

Matt and Tammy Manning moved out to Franklin Forks almost six years ago and bought their first house. Within a year's time, their water was contaminated and they are well-known for speaking up about their issue. Tammy works as a cleaning lady and Matt works as a driver and other odd jobs. At the moment, they are in the midst of a lawsuit against WPX Energy.

[Tammy]: We found this place and it was a rent to own, and we called on it and it was actually cheaper than renting an apartment or a house - so we got to do what we got to do.

[Matt]: This was in an area we liked, we took our kids swimming in the creek - when they were little. And we just like being in the country and thought this was perfect for us. And when we first bought the house there was no gas drilling going on around here at all.

[Tammy]: November 2010, we moved here. And by December of 2011, our water started erupting like a geyser - it looked like old faithful out there - was grey and nasty.

[Tammy]: And initially when I called the Gas company, I called Franklin Township and they said call the Gas company. The first thing I told the Gas company guy that

answered the phone was "I am not trying to cause you problems, we are having water problems and I'm not sure what the cause is". I didn't come out and blame them - the representative that came out here to see what's going on, we were really friendly to him; he was a super nice guy. But then, this guy calls me from the environmental section of the Gas company and he says "I want you to know I don't think this is our problem. I've seen the geography of the area and this is salt springs migrating into your well, and if you are going to say it's something else then you're going to have to prove this. Our stand is that we are not responsible." And he was just very cold and nasty. I wasn't trying to start problems, I just wanted to get to the bottom of my problem. This is the direction we were steered.

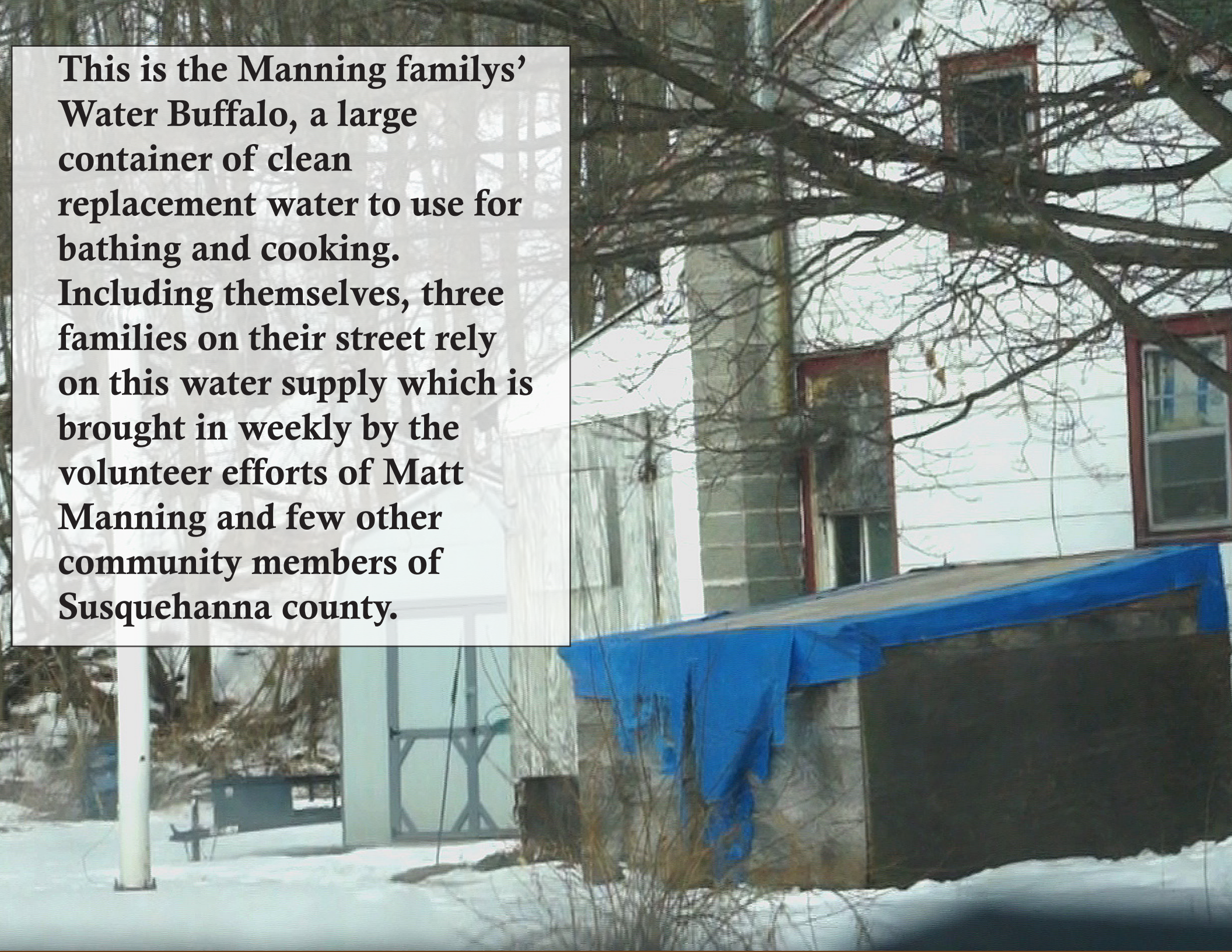
We were invited to speak about it at the township meeting, so we came and spoke out and right after that is when everything happened. There was an email circulated calling us lunatics saying that we - yeah, said we were harassing the township supervisors when in fact they had asked us to come to the meeting. The guy across the road almost lost his job for speaking out at the Town meeting, so he remains silent, because he has to if he's going to work. The guy up the road did lose his job. They cut his hours to next to nothing because he worked for a Gas company. I already have lost a couple of jobs. I clean houses - so a lot of people who are wealthy have pieces of land that they leased. So nobody has a lot of trust in a lot of people.

[Matt]: The ones that come out and really bashed us are the people who have wells on their property. They are ones who said we are lunatics, you are harassing the people and making it hard on the town. Nobody is here to take out anybody's money that they deserved. These farmers that busted their hinesys all their life, they deserve this money and I'm the first one to say that.

This is the first house we were able to buy. We wanted to retire and live the rest of our lives here. I don't know wanna move - I hate moving.

[Matt]: When it comes into your area, you've got truck after truck after truck - nonstop. Try sleeping for a month straight when they are fracking wells around you. It's just 24 hours a day, parades of trucks, non-stop non-stop. All I can say to anybody is you got to put yourself in my shoes or be in my situation before you judge anybody. How would these people feel if it was them that couldn't use their water or them who couldn't take a shower without worrying about house blowing up. So much gas coming out that you gotta vent everything and you can't use your kitchWen stove to cook in the middle of the winter or you can't use your furnace to heat your house because there's so much gas coming out of the house..how would they feel?

This is the Manning familys' Water Buffalo, a large container of clean replacement water to use for bathing and cooking. Including themselves, three families on their street rely on this water supply which is brought in weekly by the volunteer efforts of Matt Manning and few other community members of Susquehanna county.





Mr. & Mrs. Chidester

Charlie is youngest of 4 brothers of a farming family, and Lorraine worked on Wall Street and is originally from NJ. She doesn't relate with her neighbors and spends her time raising her two children. Charlie is a dairy farmer in rural PA outside of the town of Montrose and though he sometimes wishes he had a 'middle-class' income, he is proud of carrying on the tradition of dairy farming in his family. He is well read and an introvert who has not spoken out and done many interviews before this.

We have almost 1000 acres, half of the farm is owned by three of my brothers and myself, and the other half is owned by the six children. And it was 2006 and he said this is a standardized lease form, just sign it and we just want to do 1 acre of your property and do an exploratory well and that's it. The next time they approached us was about three or four years later. And he showed up with a map and said we want to put a pad here, here, here, here.. and it ended up there were 7-8 pads, and he then said they may end up putting a compressor here. It ended up that there was not much land left. There was no compensation for it and he says well, here's your signature, you signed this. We have about 600 cows all together, roughly. That's a lot of

water and a lot of animals to give water to everyday, so we simply cannot be without water. Our milk goes to the NJ/NYC dairy market and our processor told us that if we had a water impact, even if they brought in water to replace it with a water truck or anything else, that he would no longer accept our milk. So at that point, you have no income. There's a lot of overhead, health care, fuel taxes and everything.. without income, how long do you think we'll last? While they were going on, my father developed dementia. And I had to deal with that too. He was the patriarch. [Mrs. Chidester]: And it was, we'll do what Dad wants to do. And after awhile you realize his decision-making abilities weren't

there... he has Alzheimer's – [Mr. Chidester]: Had he been diagnosed when we signed, the situation we were in, but he was undiagnosed so we couldn't do anything about it. Our original lease was maybe just a hair over \$20,000 – enough to buy a used pick-up truck. How far is that going to go? Cause we had signed something that wasn't very nice, most people thought we were - stupid - Idiots, and that's how you felt. [Mrs. Chidester]: And then everybody is like "ha ha, they signed at \$25 an acre, they got nothing and I'm getting \$100 an acre" and then that guy turns around and is like "well, I'm getting \$500 an acre.." and then it just spewed this unbelievable tension and almost hate toward neighbor. It was pitting neighbor against neighbor. One neighbor is going "drill baby drill", and the other neighbor is going "I don't want any fracking going on here, I don't want a well" - but yet everybody signed. Everybody signed because the money is there. [Mr. Chidester]: There is a lot of poverty here, of course people signed! [Mrs. Chidester]: And then you got another neighbor on the top of the hill laughing "ha ha ha, I got \$6000 an acre for my land, you guys didn't know what you were doing, you were stupid." [Mr. Chidester]: For someone who

had paid mortgages and bought farms and you know, done a great job at doing what we do, it was downright humiliating. To be taken advantage of and be coned in such a way, it was unconscionable, it really was. [Mrs. Chidester]: But quite frankly, me being a Jersey girl, I would have retaliated after them, full force if I could – you don't do that! [Mr. Chidester]: I showed my neighbor my first cheque! And now we are king, now we are pretty again.

The Chidesters are five brothers who own land across 1000 acres, which means compressor stations such as this one, overlook their property. Noisy like an airport runway, these compressor stations are on constantly and are known to emit high levels of toxins that cause global warming such as hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxide.



Dimock, PA in Susquehanna County is considered to be “the ground zero of America’s energy future” because it is where high levels of methane were found in the water of many homes that had to get replacement water after people and animals fell ill and suffered health issues. ¹

The company responsible, Cabot Oil & Gas, have been sued by over 30 families and many a times, supposedly a total of 18 families, ² took financial settlements and signed non-disclosure agreements - keeping their mouths shut and refusing to talk to the public.

This information is permanently lost.



Source

¹ “Hancock & The Marcellus Shale: Visioning Impacts of Natural Gas Extraction Along the Upper Delaware”, prepared by the Columbia University Urban Design Research Seminar, Spring 2009

² Interview with Craig Stevens, Salt Lake Township, PA

Ray Kemble, an outspoken activist and ex-gas truck driver, is well known for talking about his first hand experience with the Gas company.

He has put up so many anti-frack signs outside of his home, it's a maze to walk in.

He sits on his dining table, smoking cigars, reading up on reports and keeping track of the latest news.

But I can sense, he is burnt out, because for the last five years or so, he has been in a catch 22 - he can't quit his job with the gas company as he won't get unemployment benefits, nor will he keep his mouth shut and appease them so that he can get assignments.



Vera Scroggins, an outspoken activist who lives in Susquehanna county, makes sure to document using her video camera each and every move of the Gas company. She exposes these videos online and offers tours around the area, if people want to witness the effects of fracking first-hand.

She organized a group meeting to bring people from both sides together in Susquehanna county.

However, given how controversial of a character she has become - she is under a court order put on her by Cabot and cannot step foot in 40% of her county - the people she called were hesitent and did not show up, nor was she able to confirm a public space. In the end, the meeting was held at another anti-fracking activists' place, Craig Stevens, and only one other person from the anti-fracking side showed up.



Prototype Hypothesis:

Ask interviewees to use buzzers bought from a toy store when they wanted to share an “alert” with other communities on what and how to preempt.

Insight:

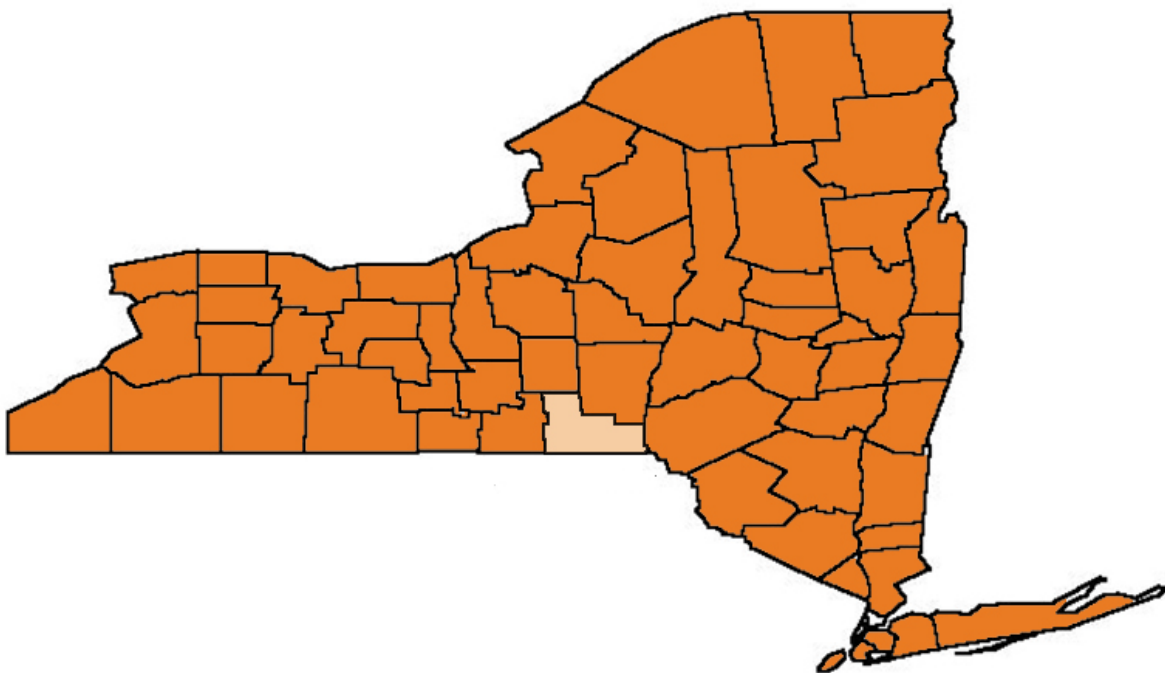
I was better off listening in *sponge-mode*.



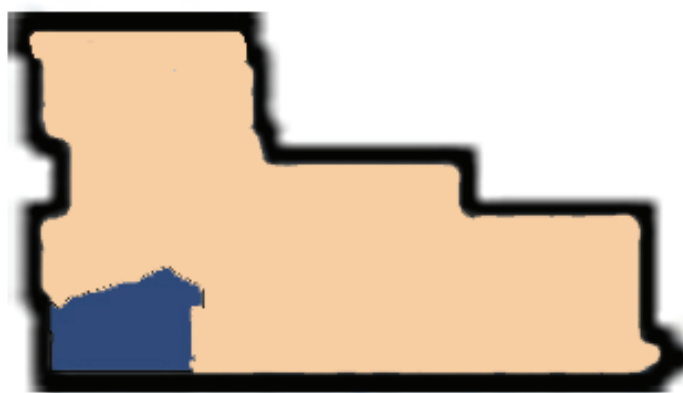
“ This sculpture was built on a manure spreader by a family that once had spoken up about their water going bad, but upon taking a settlement from the Gas company, they make fun of their neighbors, whose water is still contaminated. ”



“ When communication breaks down like this, how will people ever be able to come together, on a common ground? ”



▶ At this time, there is a ban on fracking in the state of New York, but this could change very soon as the Governor is running for a re-election.



▶ If New York does open its doors, and every landowner in the town of Vestal in Broome County leases their land, a total of 25 well pads could be built, which could generate \$515 million annually for the Oil companies.

Conducting interviews from both sides, the research goal was to understand their concerns about fracking, and whether there were any common ground issues.

Moreover, if people were willing to even come together on common grounds.



Pat Roberts, Anti-Fracking Resident

“ School buses in Vestal use every single road in this town. Do we want to have our children on the roads with those huge heavy fracking trucks? We need to work on a Road Agreement law and put it into effect. ”



Sue Messina, Pro-Fracking Resident

“ Pat and I have spoken on many occasions about the need for both sides to speak to each other because if fracking does come to fruition, which I’m pretty sure it will, you need everyone to come together to make sure it is done safely. ”



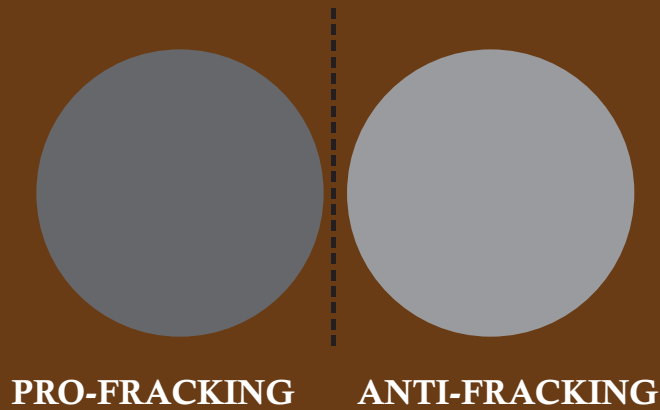
PRO-FRACKING



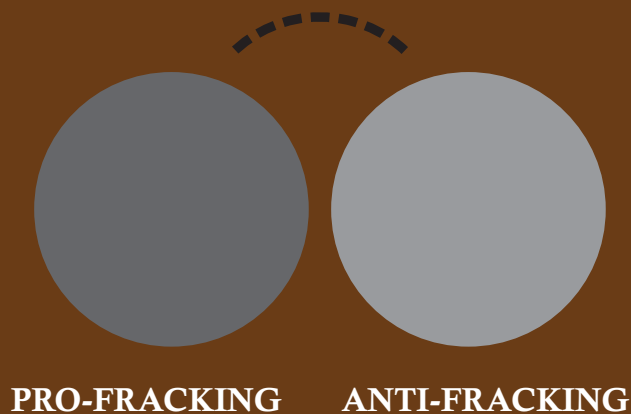
ANTI-FRACKING



Susquehanna County, PA



New York State



Common Ground Convention



The idea was to take the stories from a community that has dealt with the consequences of fracking and has become polarized, such as Susquehanna County, and bring these stories to communities all over the Southern tier of New York state, such as the town of Vestal.

The goal is that through listening, reflecting and communicating, both sides can identify their common ground issues and begin a conversation on what is in their control when it comes to managing and protecting their shared resources.

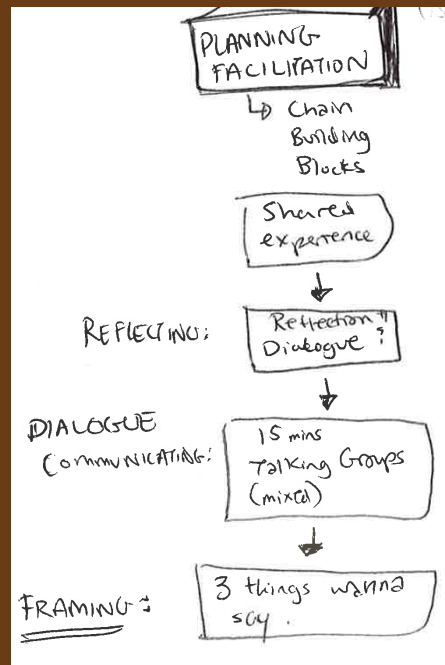
Facilitation Expertise:

1. Marc Rettig & Hannah Du Plessis Consultants at Fit Associates

- *Set the intention at the very beginning:*
the idea is for people to open up towards each other & “let go”
- *For good facilitation,* people attending should know what is expected of them

• 4 Step Guide:

1. Sharing
2. Reflecting
3. Dialogue
4. Framing



2. Paul Kellner

Scholar & Consultant - Crisis-affected countries

- It is important to present the narratives so that people can respond to them.
- Be able to show a microcosm of another community so that they [the community you are facilitating with] can see their own.

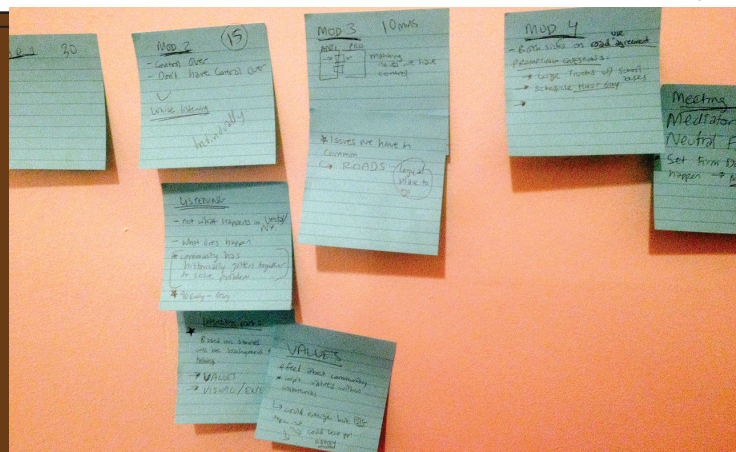
• *Social Ecological Model:*



Source: The Connect Program Website

Prototype Meeting - March 31, 2014

MODULE 1 30 mins	MODULE 2 30 mins	MODULE 3 20 mins	MODULE 4 45 mins
Intro & Identifying issues	Reflecting & Immersing	Dialogue & Ranking issues	Framing the issue Creating Agenda
<p>10 mins</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator intro Ground rules & filming Goals for this meeting 	<p>5 + 5 mins / story x 3 stories</p> <p>ACTIVITY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to story 1 Write down key issues/problems 	<p>20 mins</p> <p>ACTIVITY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go through key issues, rank the important ones Add or layer on circle map Discuss how you would move forward if you were in that scenario Agree on 3 things that could have been done in these scenarios 	<p>15 mins</p> <p>ACTIVITY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each group discusses 3 things Place on a map board
<p>10 mins</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introductions around the table: name, relationship to town. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> group listening post-its & pen guiding questions for each story listed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> smaller groups discussion ranking of post-its 	<p>30 mins</p> <p>DISCUSSION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How these things play out in terms of the issue that is common issue for community (e.g: Road issue) What needs to be addressed <p>AGENDA SETTING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What needs to be addressed Next Meeting date <ul style="list-style-type: none"> whole group activity microphone / talking stick concentric circle map
<p>10 mins</p> <p>ACTIVITY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FIVE Whys <p>State 5 common ground issues that the community should be concerned about, place them on circle poster.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> individual activity post-its & pen concentric circle map 			



Feedback from Community Leaders:

MODULE 1:

- No group activity, but individual one to list out concerns of the town.

MODULE 2:

- Be specific about what people are listening for, so have them list out what is “in their control/ not in their control”

MODULE 3:

- Dialogue & ranking should happen in small groups and then each can present.
- “It won’t work to ask people to figure out how they would have moved forward because the socio-economic context of PA is entirely different”

MODULE 4:

- The list of “in control” should be used for the common ground issue discussion, which is steered towards the Road Agreement issue.
- Pat & Sue will bring guiding questions.

“ *With the help of Pat and Sue, a total of 9 community members turned up for the first Common Ground Convention on April 5, 2014 at the Vestal Library.*

The average age of the group was 55, because Vestal is a depressed town, and most of the younger generation move away when they have the chance. ”

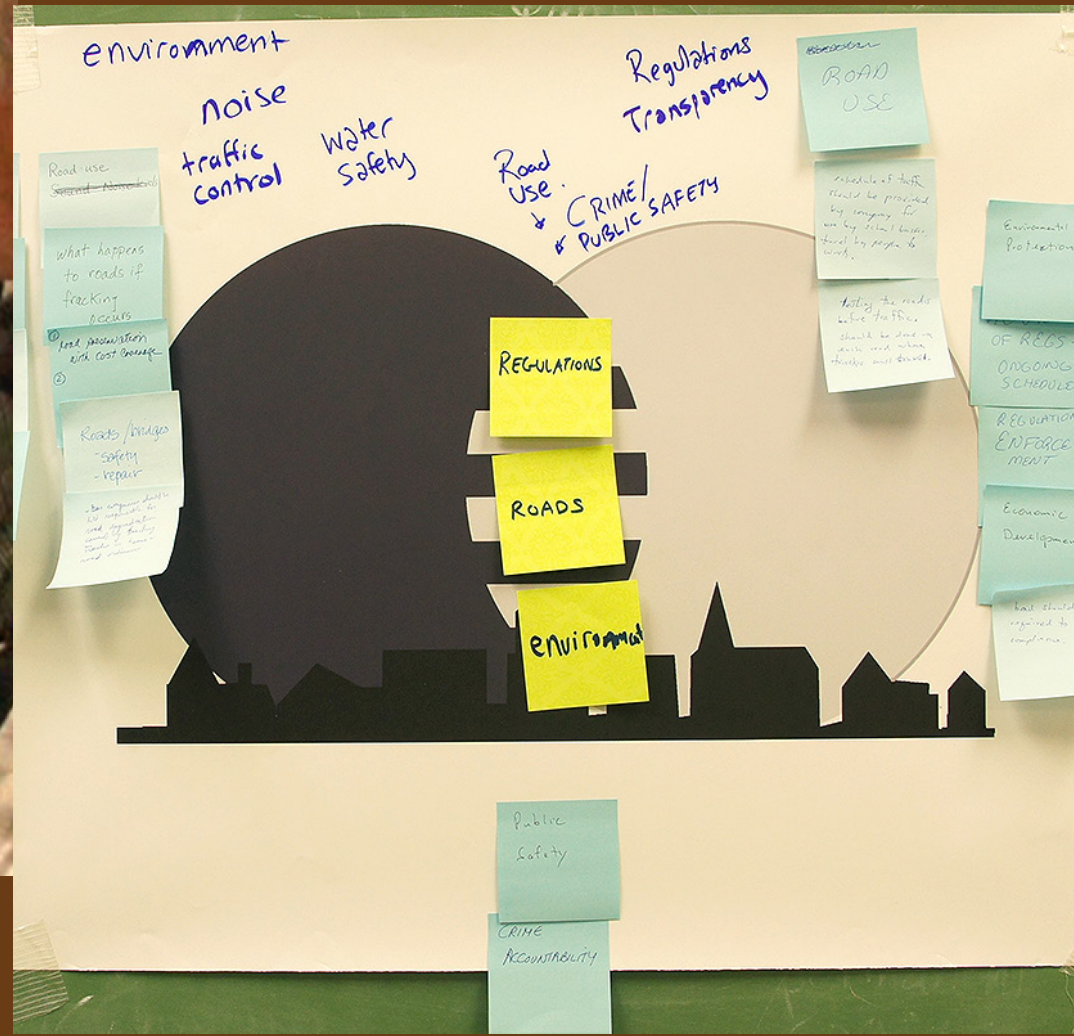


MODULE 1:

Both sides lists out three main issues they are concerned about and places them on the logo map to identify the common ground issues for the group.

Common Ground Issues:

- *Regulations*
- *Roads*
- *Environment*
- *Public Safety*



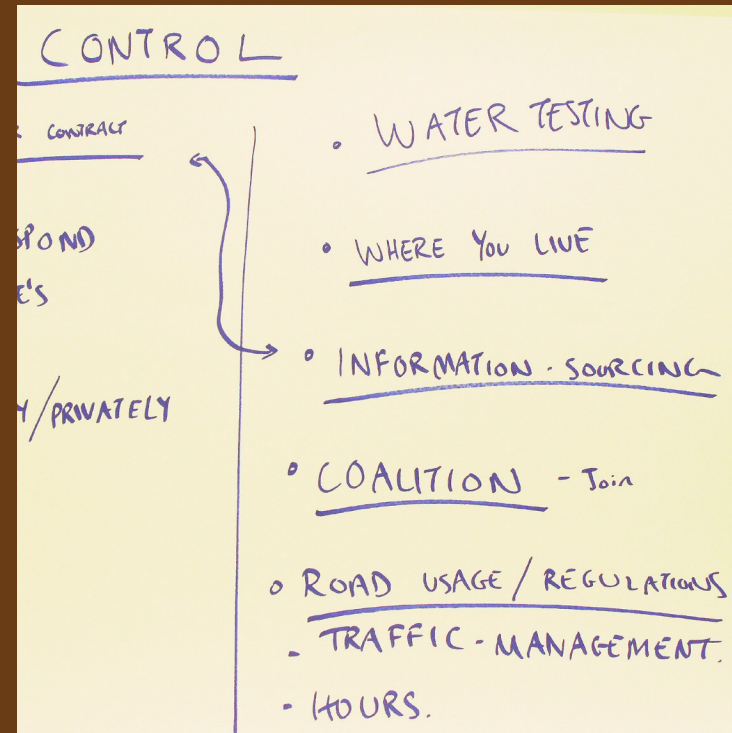
MODULE 2:

The group listens to four stories from Susquehanna County, and list out what is in their control and what is not using post-it notes.



MODULE 3:

Break out in groups of 2-3 people to discuss one of the four stories and using the list of what is in their control and not, prompt how it would be best to react in the situation.



MODULE 4:

With the “in control” list, the discussion of common ground issue takes place.

In this case, it was a discussion on how to draft the first road agreement of Vestal.



Road Agreement Draft:

- *Roads should be assessed by town*
- *Once assessment is done, the infrastructure should be done by the company*
- *High frequency truck traffic should have regulations on timings, so they are off the road when school buses are in transit.*

ROADS :

- THE ONES WE DO HAVE CONTROL OVER
 - State line Rd
 - HOGAN Rd.
 - BAKER HILL Rd.
 - CRUMM Rd.
 - COLLINS HILL Rd

“I realized that while the group discussed the road agreement issue, it wasn’t necessarily about the physical conditions of Vestal roads, but rather about the power a community has to decide why and how they want to manage and protect their shared resources.

In fact, this was the first time, people had sat down to brainstorm Road Use Agreement law which Vestal residents have been pushing to put into effect for the last three years. ”





Sue Messina

Pro-Fracking Resident/Town Board

“ The way in which the meeting was organized led to the natural progression so that in the end, everyone felt comfortable talking. The Goal that we had in terms of bringing community members together that are polar opposites on an issue, to have them find a common ground was absolutely successful.

I hear the majority of the group say they would like to meet again and move forward about this. ”



Renee Daily

Anti-Fracking Resident

“ It’s good to get to know people, and it can only benefit our community.

I am so used to having pro-fracking people drive past me when I am holding a sign and giving me a finger and calling me an environmental freak –

I’m made to feel like an extremist and I don’t feel that I am, I only feel that I am expressing my feelings.

So it’s good to get to know you as caring people, and it’s not that I didn’t know that, but I didn’t have experience with it. ”



Julie Lewis
Pro-Fracking Resident

“ I enjoyed this – I think it’s nice when two sides can come together. And I have to applaud you [anti-frack side], because you had to take the step to think if drilling does come, then I am willing to – and that must be hard for you. ”



Barry Messina
Pro-Fracking Resident

“ A lot of what is going to make or break this is the degree to which we keep track of what the people who are out there with the fix and shovels are doing. If we start that with the roads and increase our visibility with what’s going on with the roads, that’s a good step. ”



Al Tricome
Anti-Fracking Resident

“ The focus of today was road preservation and the preventing of road degradation. And in that process, we found each other at common ground - that fracking needs to be regulated. The activity of listening, my partner and I found it too narrow a focus, because it did not express the concerns of other groups who are not farmers and represent more general communities. ”



Aubrey Clark
Anti-Fracking Resident

“ I feel encouraged that we can actually have this conversation, so thank you.”



Isaac Silberman-Gorn

Community Organizer, Citizen Action of NY

“Sanford is the first place that comes to mind, and I’m happy to intro you to folks there. Some very divisive characters there. Want me to connect you?”



“I finally felt excitement now as I had wanted to create a communications tool which community organizers could use to strengthen their work. And that I could see the potential in collecting and curating the voices of people from both sides to create a larger interactive piece that integrates documentary film, ethereal audioscapes and choose-your-own adventure games.”



The Audio Archive

Content uploaded online:

- the audio stories
- the transcripts
- images of the people speaking
- facilitation plan
- consent & feedback forms [for print]
- meeting booklet [for print]
- logo image [for poster-size print]

Search for stories, topics, and people...

Susquehanna County Stories

A collection by Common Ground Convention · Introduction >

These are stories collected from Susquehanna County from various members of the community who have either leased their land or been impacted by the consequences of gas drilling.

Please use these along with the facilitation guide which you can find on the Common Ground Convention "About" page, or email: commongroundconvention@gmail.com

Vera: Shunned by Common Ground Convention

Ray Kemble Common Ground Convention

The Chidesters Common Ground Convention

Chris Acker Common Ground Convention

Tammy & Matt Manning Common Ground Convention

Sam Magnotti Common Ground Convention

Search for stories, topics, and people...

The Abbotts Common Ground Convention

These are stories collected from Susquehanna County, PA, where fracking has affected the community. Common Ground Convention

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The Abbotts Common Ground Convention

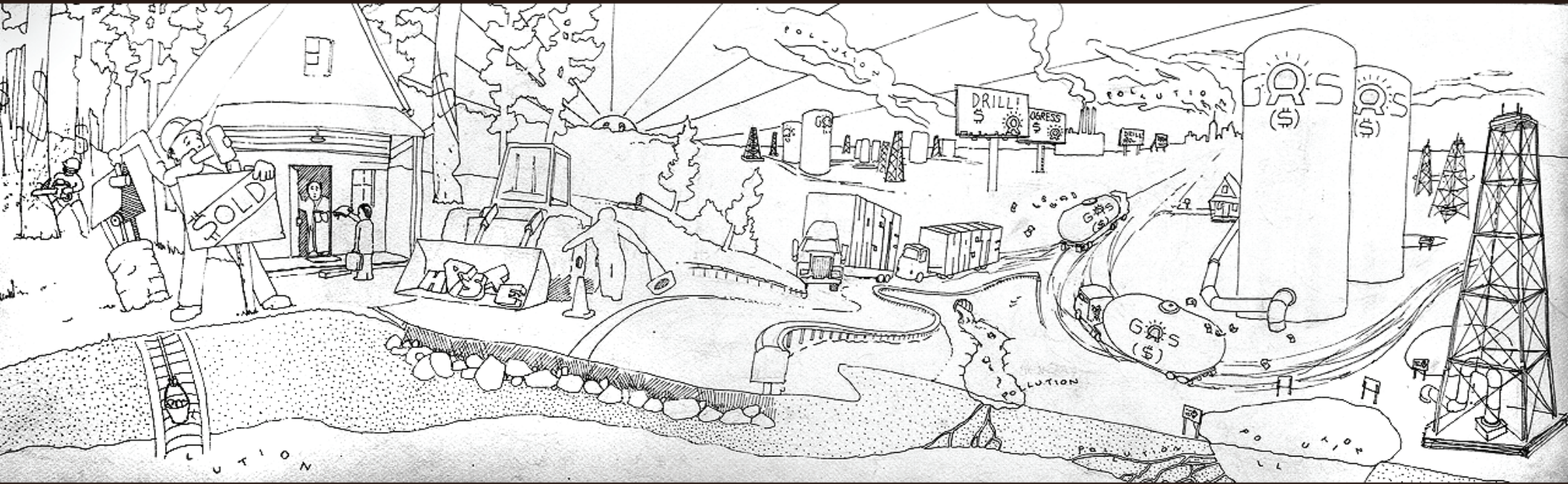
[Stanley]: Farming has always been a struggle. We only own 205 acres, but it is still ours.
[Mike]: We held out for a good year when they first come and they were giving \$25 for an acre. And then we held out for a year and got \$50 and then after that it just boomed!
[Stanley]: Because the price of milk was down and we didn't have any way to keep the farm going so we signed at \$50 so we could buy fuel and tractors and feed the cows. The prices were basically gone for fuel and parts. They came on us and then they yank it up under you - that's not right. I mean, if you are not going to have it written up in a contract, that's how the game started. Saved every penny we could and used the barn for just six months. I remember the boys standing in the upstairs window, screaming while looking at the barn on fire. We lost a 100 year old insurance - we started off with a \$200,000 loss. Many of us have savings as far as I know - it's all invested in this farm to keep it going. And hopefully the Cobot company bought it before the gas companies came around. It was a weak and was like remember when you were going to sell that property? And I'm like no, not selling that. If those years and then hand it over to them so that they can make the gas royalties off of it - I don't think so. If something happens, they have to come back and take care of it. Everything scares you. But you are not going to find out till it's done so you just pray and hope that everything works out for the best. There's nothing worse than farming, it can't get any worse than that - ideally!

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Our Common Backyard

Illustration by Ian Kirby



“

Just the simple act of people coming together, sitting around a table, regardless of which side of the fence they are on, is vital.

In the end of the day, whether or not fracking happens in New York, we will have to live together and share a common backyard. ”

Field Interviews

Susquehanna County, PA:

Vera Scroggins,
Resident / Activist

Mike, Stanley Abbott & Mrs. Abbott
Farming family who have leased

Lorraine Chidester & Charlie Chidester
Farming family who had leased land (Anti)

Sam Magnotti & Mrs. Magnotti
Residents / Business owners who have leased land

Tammy & Matt Manning
Residents / Water Contaminated

Ray Kemble
Activist / Ex-Gas worker

Craig Stevens
Resident / Activist

Chris Acker
Resident / Leased land

Laurie Webster
Resident / Leased land

Binghamton, New York:

Isaac Gorn-Silberman
Community Organizer, Citizen Action NY

Adrian
Independent Farmer

Vestal, New York:

Mark Petro,
Resident

Sue Messina,
Town Board / Resident

Barry Messina,
Resident

Julie Lewis
Resident

Christy Everett
Business Owner / Resident

Robert Polancik
Resident / Vestal Gas Coalition

Tom Gorman
Resident / Vestal Gas Coalition

Reneé Daily
Resident

Pat Roberts
Resident

Aubrey Clark
Resident

Al Tricome
Resident / University Professor

Marie Spencer
Resident

Research Interviews

Susan Van Dolsen
Activist, New York Against Fracking

Barbara Arindell
Director, Damascus Citizens for Sustainability

Dr. Simona Perry
“Fractured Communities, Fractured Lives”

Alexa Bradley
Co-Founder, On The Commons

Ann Brummitt
Organizer, The Great Lakes Water Commons

Shayda Naficy
Director, International Water Campaign
Corporate Accountability International

Lauren DeRusha
“Take Back the Tap” Water Campaign Organizer
Corporate Accountability International

Mike Bagdley
Director, Project Use (New Jersey)
Matt Smith
Organizer, Food & Water Watch

Claire Donohue
Organizer, Sane Energy Project

Advisors

Miya Osaki
Designer
Diagram Consultants, New York City

Jaimie Cloud
Founder/Educator
The Cloud Institute for Sustainability

Corine Rosen
Community Organizer (Fracking New York)
Food & Water Watch, New York office

Secondary Research Interviews:

Paul Baines
Interactive Designer, Great Lakes Commons

Elke Dochtermann
Online Engagement, Fenton Media

MJ Moneymaker
Online Engagement, WITNESS

Emily Jacobi
Founder, Digital Democracy

Emily Treat
Game Designer, New York City

Parker Mitchell
Blue Ridge Foundation

Lina Srivastava
Transmedia Consultant, New York City

Matt Parker
Game Designer, New York City

Common Ground Convention

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MFA 2014
Design for Social Innovation
New York City, NY**