

First Presbyterian Church
Cooperstown, New York 13326

Session Position and Resolution
November 15, 2010

Horizontal Hydrofracking: An Issue of Church Concern

As Presbyterians and Christians, we believe that God blessed the earth with abundant resources for supporting our social and economic well-being. This being said:

Good stewardship requires that these resources be managed productively, efficiently and sustainably. Furthermore, proper management practices should not despoil or destroy other resources.

Justice requires that resources be managed for the benefit of all. Furthermore, our management of a particular resource should not deprive others of the benefits which they might enjoy from the use of other resources, now and in the future.

Natural gas is an abundant energy resource. It can be used to replace coal for generating electric power, and thus reduce emissions of greenhouse gasses. Furthermore, increased production of natural gas reduces our nation's dependence on imported fossil fuels, which often come from countries that abuse human rights and ignore environmental damage caused by energy extraction.

Gas drilling could be of financial benefit to local landowners. Many of our neighbors have already signed leases to permit gas drilling on their property. This is their right. Through years of economic decline, rural life has been hard, and it is understandable why farmers and other residents would seize upon an opportunity to sign a lease. We are distressed, however, when we hear that some may have been misled into signing leases offering minimal compensation.

Horizontal hydrofracking, a relatively new technology, appears to be the most efficient way to produce natural gas from shale deposits in New York State. However, independent experts believe that it poses a serious risk to our water resources. First, the explosive pressure used to frack the gas-bearing shale might force the toxic chemicals used in the process through fissures and faults in the rock layers above into aquifers that supply drinking water. Secondly, accidents happen. Surface spills and faulty well bores provide opportunities for contaminating surface streams and lakes, as well as the water table below, with toxic fracking fluids and brine recovered from the wells. The Department of Environmental Conservation's Generic Environmental Impact Statement governing horizontal hydrofracking does not address these issues adequately.

In conclusion: Horizontal hydrofracking is dividing our community between those who support and those who oppose gas drilling. As Christians, we do not wish to incite

further division. However, we are compelled to speak out when the good stewardship of God's creation is at stake and injustice is at hand. Horizontal hydrofracking is not good stewardship; it presents a clear and present danger to the sustainability of our clean water resources. No reliable and economical technology exists to clean up mistakes thousands of feet underground. Secondly, the permanent contamination of the water wells of homes near drilling sites would be a major injustice.

Therefore, we object to the use of the DEC's Generic Environmental Impact Statement and support a temporary moratorium on gas drilling using horizontal hydrofracking until such time as the State of New York has rewritten and implemented rigorous regulations sufficient to ensure the future protection of our region's water resources. We believe that everyone in this community, both supporters of gas drilling and its opponents, should be able to join us in supporting this position.

Resolution: The Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Cooperstown opposes implementation of the Generic Environmental Impact Statement governing horizontal hydrofracking and supports a temporary moratorium on gas drilling using this technology until such time as the State of New York has rewritten and implemented rigorous regulations sufficient to ensure the future protection of our region's water resources. Furthermore, the Session urges the members of the congregation to support this resolution with concrete actions, including urging other faith communities to join with us in supporting this resolution. (Adopted November 15, 2010)