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## **HYDRAULIC FRACTURING IN ALASKA: FACT SHEET**

### **Background**

The topic of hydraulic fracturing is being discussed more frequently in Alaska as focus is placed on the practice nationwide. In that vein, it is necessary to separate fact from fiction when it comes to how fracturing is used in Alaska, and what the State of Alaska's recently revised hydraulic fracturing regulations stipulate.

### **Facts**

Hydraulic fracturing has been used in the United States since the late 1940s, and in Alaska since 1963. The practice is not new to the state, although the technology has greatly improved since then. Wells in both the Cook Inlet and on the North Slope have been hydraulically fractured for decades, all without incident. Hydraulic fracturing is also not specific to oil and gas: it has been used in the U.S. to stimulate the flow of water from water wells, to bring geothermal wells into commercial viability, and to serve as a remediation tool for cleaning up EPA-designated Superfund sites. Sources:

- EPA: [A Citizens Guide to Superfund Cleanup and Hydraulic Fracturing](#) (2001)
- MIT: [The Future of Geothermal Energy](#) (2006)

Hydraulic fracturing is the key driver behind recent carbon dioxide emission reductions in the United States, which now stand at 12 percent below 2005 levels, according to the Energy Information Administration, a nonpartisan government agency. Source: <http://www.eia.gov/totalenergy/data/monthly/pdf/mer.pdf> (2016)

Fracturing fluid is composed of more than 99 percent water and sand. Common industrial and even household materials make up the remaining, miniscule percentage. Specific chemicals used in each Alaska fracturing job are required by law to be listed to [www.fracfocus.org](http://www.fracfocus.org), a public, nationwide, searchable database. Source: FracFocus: <https://fracfocus.org/chemical-use/what-chemicals-are-used>

Alaska's revised hydraulic fracturing regulations are among the most stringent in the country. Among the key provisions of the Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission's regulations are the following:

- Landowner notification
- Advance approval required for well work, including drilling
- All wells must demonstrate barriers to prevent flow of any fluids to surrounding rock
- Each well must have a surface casing, and be cemented to restrict fluids
- Wells that cannot demonstrate competent barriers must be shut in immediately
- Pressure management devices must be installed on every well, and monitored daily
- If measurement device indicates a compromise, well must be shut in immediately
- Periodic mechanical integrity tests are mandatory
- Unannounced inspections by AOGCC field inspectors are mandatory

- More -

## AOGA hydraulic fracturing fact sheet, page 2

The Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (AOGCC) conducted a robust, thorough, and transparent public process dealing with the recent hydraulic fracturing regulations revisions, with participation from diverse stakeholders. Public notice and/or hearings were held on the following dates:

- December 20, 2012
- December 31, 2012
- January 11, 2013
- January 17, 2013
- March 11, 2013
- August 7, 2013
- January 15, 2014

Source: AOGCC: <http://doa.alaska.gov/ogc/frac/fracindex.html> (2014)

The AOGCC says no cases of groundwater contamination have occurred in Alaska:

“In over 50 years of oil and gas production, Alaska has yet to suffer a single documented instance of subsurface damage to an underground source of drinking water. As long as each well is properly constructed and its mechanical integrity is maintained, hydraulic fracturing should have **no potential to damage** (emphasis added) any freshwater.” Source: <http://doa.alaska.gov/ogc/reports-studies/HydraulicFracWhitePaper.pdf> (2015)

Prominent government regulators tout the safety of hydraulic fracturing:

- Gina McCarthy, EPA Administrator: “There’s nothing inherently dangerous in fracking that sound engineering practices can’t accomplish.” *National Journal*, 11/6/13
- Ken Salazar, former Secretary of the Interior: “I would say to everybody that hydraulic fracking is safe.” *Washington Examiner*, 9/24/13
- Ernest Moniz, Secretary of the Department of Energy: “I still have not seen any evidence of fracking per se contaminating groundwater.” *Washington Examiner*, 8/2/13
- Lisa Jackson, former EPA Administrator: “I’m not aware of any proven case where the fracking process itself has affected water.” U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, 5/24/11

Source: [https://energyindepth.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/HF\\_Infographic\\_1pg.pdf](https://energyindepth.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/HF_Infographic_1pg.pdf) (2016)

AOGA is a professional trade association whose mission is to foster the long-term viability of the oil and gas industry in Alaska for the benefit of all Alaskans. More information about the organization can be found at [www.aoga.org](http://www.aoga.org), on Facebook (AlaskaOilAndGas), or twitter (@AOGA).

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