



TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ALASKA OIL & GAS CONSERVATION COMMISSION

BY BOB SHAVELSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COOK INLETKEEPER

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA • DECEMBER 15, 2016

Madam Chair & Members of the Commission –

My name's Bob Shavelson and I am the Executive Director of Cook Inletkeeper, a community-based nonprofit that's been working since 1995 to protect the Cook Inlet watershed and the life it sustains.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on our proposal to amend 20 AAC 25.280 to require public notice and opportunity for comment pursuant to 20 AAC 25.540.

As noted in our letter to the Commission in September 2016, proposed fracking operations in Cook Inlet have prompted some of the most vigorous debate I've heard in my 22 years working on oil and gas issues in Alaska.

In response, we believe it reflects basic good governance to open fracking applications that come before the AOGCC to public notice and comment.

Our democracy is grounded in transparency and public participation, and when issues such as fracking implicate—or potentially implicate—our publicly-owned lands and waters, it only makes sense to give Alaskans an opportunity to review permit applications and to comment on them.

And while fracking and other stimulation techniques have been ongoing for decades in Cook Inlet and beyond, our understanding of the potential harms from fracking has grown considerably over the past decade.

I would like to submit for the record two documents published this year: 1) A Compendium of Scientific, Medical and Media Findings Demonstrating Risks and Harms of Fracking, by Concerned Health Professionals of New York and Physicians for Social Responsibility;¹ and 2)

¹ Available at: <http://www.psr.org/resources/fracking-compendium.html>

Hydraulic Fracturing for Oil & Gas: Impacts from the Hydraulic Fracturing Water Cycle on Drinking Water Resources in the United State, by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.²

These and other materials document specific and quantifiable risks and harms to ground and surface waters from fracking, water withdrawal and waste disposal activities, and while the geology and hydrology in Alaska in many ways may differ from the scenarios cited in the literature, there are parallels that make them highly relevant too.

Furthermore, as noted in our September 2016 letter, AOGCC already provides notice and an opportunity for public comment on a number of authorizations that raise similar environmental and other concerns. These include applications for exceptions to well spacing requirements (20 AAC 25.055), applications for annular disposal of drilling waste (20 AAC 25.080), applications for enhanced recovery (20 AAC 25.402), and applications to commingle production and injection within the same wellbore (20 AAC 25.215).

As a result, we believe the public deserves the same opportunity for public participation when it comes to hydraulic fracturing.

Some have argued additional public participation will result in undue costs and delays. To that, we offer two points. First, fracking applications are complicated documents, and AOGCC itself took several months to review the Cosmopolitan Unit fracking materials. As a result, we do not see a thirty (30) day comment period as a significant hurdle to normal development timelines.

Additionally, we believe the public can provide potentially useful information to AOGCC as it deliberates over fracking applications. For example, we provided the Commission earlier this week with a memo from the Natural Resources Defense Council documenting several issues regarding the Cosmopolitan Unit.³

As a result, whatever costs result from providing Alaskans the right to participate in fracking applications are what we consider the just and reasonable costs of doing business in a state where so much hinges on adequate protections for clean water and healthy communities.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

² Available at: <https://www.epa.gov/hfstudy/executive-summary-hydraulic-fracturing-study-final-assessment-2016>

³ Available at: <https://inletkeeper.org/resources/contents/bluecrestfrackingmemo>