

Are Our National Forests at Risk?

This year \$550,000 in state funding was proposed by the General Assembly for research to support the characterization of the oil and gas potential in North Carolina state lands. Apparently, the state government is weighing whether public land is to be opened up for natural gas drilling and fracking.

Our treasured national forests and public lands are absolutely wrong for fracking.

What is fracking?

Fracking, or hydraulic fracturing, is a process in which millions of gallons of pressurized water, sand and unknown chemicals are injected into an up to 8,000 foot-deep well to fracture the shale and release the trapped gas.

What's the Environmental Impact of Fracking in the Forests?

The only things that fracking will leave behind to the forests are a ruined landscape, toxic waters and poisonous ponds.

- The footprint of fracking is much larger in scale than conventional drilling. For instance, an 8,000-foot-deep well, with its containment ponds, can cover up to 10 acres forestland.
- Fracking is also more disruptive than logging to the forests. Compared to logging, the well pad for fracking requires permanent clearing, affecting and delaying new growth.
- From 1 to 8 million gallons of water may be used to frack a well. For each well, 80 to 300 tons of a mixture of 596 chemicals may be used, many of them toxic; for example, formaldehyde, ethylene glycol, methanol and benzene. The natural gas industry can ask that a chemical or mixture of chemicals be considered a trade secret. They would not have to disclose this information to the public.
- Scientists have identified toxic benzene, toluene, ethyl benzene, xylene and other volatile organic compounds emitted in the fracking process.



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Protect our Public Lands

Pisgah National Forest, which is the first tract of land purchased under the Weeks Act of 1911, along with Nantahala National Forest, Uwharrie National Forest, and Croatan National Forest, are the four National Forests in North Carolina. They cover 1.25 million acres of public lands from the mountains to the sea. These forest lands are important to the livelihood of many residents in NC and provide key opportunities for outdoor recreation and enjoyment of natural beauty.

Although the National Forest Management Act of Nantahala and Pisgah national forests for the next 10 to 15 years were revised this March, the gas industry and other drilling proponents are still seeking to weaken the regulations.

Turning public lands over for a large-scale industry activity such as fracking jeopardizes the true value they provide. We need to work together to protect our public lands.



Photo <http://vustudents.ning.com> "Top 10 Forests in the world"

Resources:

- ◆ Jeremiah Knupp, "National Forests For Sale" Day Hiking, September 2013
<http://www.blueridgeoutdoors.com/go-outside/george-washington-national-forests-fracking-drilling/>
- ◆ Madeline Fisher, "Fracking's Footprint: Scientists Study Impact of SHALES Gas Development on Pennsylvania's Forests", July 2012
<https://www.soils.org/publications/sh/pdfs/53/4/1>
- ◆ Department of Agriculture, "Revision of Land Management Plan for the Nantahala and Pisgah National Forests", March 2014
<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-03-12/html/2014-05374.htm>
- ◆ Southern Environmental Law Center, "Fracking in the George Washington National Forest"
<http://www.southernenvironment.org/projects/gwfracking>
- ◆ Bruce Henderson, "Fracking bill moves quickly through NC House" [newsobserver.com](http://www.newsobserver.com), May 28, 2014
<http://www.newsobserver.com/2014/05/28/3893215/fracking-bill-headed-for-house.html>
- ◆ National Forests in North Carolina
<http://www.fs.usda.gov/nfsnc>

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