

MEDIA RELEASE: TRC reveals Toxic Chemicals in Taranaki Frack Job

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FROM: Climate Justice Taranaki

"We are alarmed by the response of the Taranaki Regional Council to a recent Official Information Act request which confirms that toxic chemicals are being used in fracking jobs and then released into our environment by oil and gas companies" says spokesperson for Climate Justice Taranaki Teresa Goodin.

Early this year TRC resource management director Fred McLay was asked by Climate Justice Taranaki if he knew what chemicals were being used here in fracking. He said it was government's responsibility as council were only concerned with what came out of wells, not what went in. An Official Information Act request to Ministry of Economic Development then put the responsibility back with TRC who, three months later, have finally responded with some information.

On 16 June 2011 via Green MP Catherine Delahunty, TRC released some information on water use, waste disposal and a list of ten chemicals used in one recent frack job. Most notable in the frack fluid list are Xcide 102 – a biocide toxic to humans, animals, fish, birds and ecological systems; Inflo-150 – a friction reducer containing methanol and ethylene glycol, both highly toxic, hazardous substances; and GBW-41L (Hydrogen peroxide) – an animal carcinogen harmful to humans even at low concentrations in vapour form. These chemical cocktails make up approximately 3% of the frack fluid. Crucially, minute quantities can cause serious health impacts.

Fracking or hydraulic fracturing is a method where large amounts of water containing chemicals and sand are pumped under intense pressure into the ground to fracture geological formations, allowing extraction of hard to reach natural gas and oil. According to PEPANZ spokesperson John Pfahlert, fracking has been used across Taranaki for decades, but as resources dwindle techniques are becoming more aggressive and dangerous as more difficult reserves are opened up. Fracking is now done horizontally to access more ground and using toxic chemicals which are not even being tested for, as can be seen in TRC's monitoring reports online.

TRC currently do not even require resource consents for fracking. They claim that the fracking *"occurs in oil and gas reservoirs that are between about 2500 and 4500 metres below the land surface"* and therefore pose *"very minimal"* risk to ground water resources commonly *"at 600 metres or above"* in the region. Canadian-based company TAG Oil however confirm that they are fracking in the Cheal permit area near Stratford at depths between 1400 and 1800 metres. *"If you take into account that TAG also says the rock fractures up to 1500 feet (460m) in any direction then we are getting much closer to aquifers than the council claims."* says Teresa Goodin.

Fracking also involves drilling through aquifers, and while TRC claims *"there can be no discharges of fracking fluids to them"*, thousands of incidents have occurred across the US, where leaks in the casings or other technical failures have poisoned the water.

In Australia, the health, environmental and social impacts of fracking for coal seam gas have led to massive opposition from farmers and residents.

The disposal of toxic drilling wastes under TRC consents, by the euphemistically-termed 'landfarming', is another major concern. Shockingly, these are non-notified consents and allow drilling waste to be discharged onto land just 25 or 30 metres from surface water, springs, water bores, the coast or property boundaries.

In one case in 2010 (Consent 7591-1), drilling waste was allowed to be discharged just 12 metres from several named streams and property boundaries, 6 metres from other surface water courses, and cows grazed on a paddock where drilling mud had been applied. *"There is significant risk of contaminants accumulating in the animals grazing on 'landfarmed' drilling wastes, subsequently to be consumed by humans,"* says Okato resident Catherine Cheung. *"Waste is also being pumped back into the ground via 'Deep-well Injection', which together with fracking, has been blamed for the unprecedented increase in seismic events around some areas in the US and UK where there has been prolific gas extraction,"* she adds.

TRC, by allowing fracking without resource consents, and discharge of drilling waste under non-notified resource consents with insufficient safeguards and monitoring in place, is disregarding the basic rights of the local community to clean water, air, food, and information. The people of Taranaki deserve a lot more than what we are getting. Climate Justice Taranaki urges the government and councils to look to France, South Africa, Quebec, New York State, Pennsylvania and New South Wales where fracking has been banned while in-depth inquiries are taking place to assess the real risks. *"We also urge farmers and landowners to follow our neighbours in Australia and 'Lock The Gates!'"* concludes Teresa Goodin.

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Teresa Goodin can be contacted via climatejusticetaranaki@riseup.net

LINKS

1. References and further reading:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/personalfinance/offshorefinance/8488166/Frack-and-ruin-the-rise-of-hydraulic-fracturing.html>

<http://www.endocrinedisruption.com/endocrine.fossilfuel.php>

<http://www.frackalert.org/index.asp?page=64>

http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/special_eds/20110221/gas/

2. <http://lockthegate.org.au/>

3. A TAG Oil brochure with a diagram of their fracking can be made available to the media.

4. The Council's OIA answers are attached.

Climate Justice Taranaki

<http://climatejusticetaranaki.wordpress.com/>

http://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group_205878806095057

<http://nodrilling.wordpress.com/taranaki/>