

Fracking internationally: Communities around the world call for fracking bans

Fracking is spreading like wildfire, not only in Canada, but also all over the world. Yet growing alongside the rapidly expanding industry is a grassroots movement to ban fracking and protect water sources, public health and the environment.

The United States has one of the largest shale gas reserves and is leading the fracking boom. Companies like Encana are breaking records with the amount of water used for fracking operations from the Great Lakes Basin.

In August 2013, Americans Against Fracking – a coalition of environmental and consumer organizations – delivered 650,000 public comments calling for a ban against fracking on public lands. In May 2012 Vermont became the first state to ban fracking. There have been local measures to stop fracking passed in 20 states, including California, Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia. The Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force and the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa have also instituted bans. New York State has been a hotbed of activity in the fight to ban fracking with frequent rallies and the creation of a 230 member coalition “New Yorkers Against Fracking.”

In Mexico, fracking is underway with a few exploration wells along the U.S. border. While the Mexican government controlled energy provision in the country for decades, in December 2013, it passed law reforms that encourage the participation of private companies. Fracking proponents often argue that without private sector participation, Mexico will not be able to take advantage of its shale gas reserves.

The Alianza Mexicana contra el Fracking was launched in August 2013, creating a coalition



2012 Global Frackdown event in front of the European Parliament in Brussels where “fracking fluid” was served to everyone. Photo courtesy of Food and Water Watch

of 16 environmental, consumer and human rights organizations, including the Council of Canadians’ Blue Planet Project. The coalition is calling for a fracking ban.

In Europe, France and Bulgaria have banned fracking, while Ireland, the Czech Republic, Denmark and North Rhine-Westphalia state in Germany have implemented moratoriums. German brewers made international headlines this spring when they warned that fracking could harm the beer industry.

Romania’s government is reconsidering the future of fracking in the country. Romanians have held frequent and fervent protests against the practice, and Bulgarians crossed the border in June 2013 to join their neighbours in calling for a ban. Thousands have protested outside of government buildings. In October 2013, 600 farmers, joined by priests, formed a human chain and occupied a field that Chevron is trying to frack. Strong community opposition in Europe, coupled with the myth of a natural gas glut driving down prices in the U.S., has slowed shale gas development in some parts of Europe. Although Poland is estimated to have

one of the largest unconventional gas reserves in Europe, gas companies have recently gotten cold feet, casting doubt on the future of fracking there.

Despite community protests, South Africa recently gave the green light to fracking companies by lifting a moratorium on fracking that had been in place since April 2011.

China has a high number of shale gas reserves and has moved full steam ahead with fracking. Concerns were raised recently when gas companies began fracking in Sichuan, an earthquake-prone province in southwestern China. The threats fracking poses to water and public health are compounded in China given the country's existing water crisis. Nearly half of China's rivers are so polluted they are unfit for drinking.

There is currently no fracking in the U.K. but companies are busy submitting applications for shale gas and coal bed methane projects. The British government suspended fracking after earthquakes linked to fracking made international headlines in 2011. The government has since lifted the moratorium and is readily approving applications. However, protesters have been successful in slowing down Cuadrilla Resources, a British company attempting to spearhead the shale gas and oil rush in the U.K. The company announced that it was withdrawing from two key sites in the fall of 2013 following a summer of legal challenges and fervent protests that included 1,000 people camping out at a Balcombe drilling site in West Sussex. Protesters are continuing to demand a ban on fracking and set up camp at the headquarters of West Sussex County Council in November 2013.

Communities around the world are joining a global call to ban fracking as part of the annual "Global Frackdown." During the first Global Frackdown, which was held in September 2012, more than 200 community actions in more than 20 countries challenged fracking and its

negative impacts on water, the environment and public health. The 2013 Global Frackdown, held on October 19, was an even bigger success with more than 250 actions in 30 countries. Communities around the world organized rallies, street theatre actions, and held meetings with politicians – all as part of the call for a global ban on fracking.

