

Newfoundland and Labrador

On November 4, 2013, Minister of Natural Resources Derrick Dalley announced that the government would not be “accepting applications for onshore and onshore-to-offshore petroleum exploration using hydraulic fracturing,” which effectively created a temporary ban on fracking in Newfoundland and Labrador.

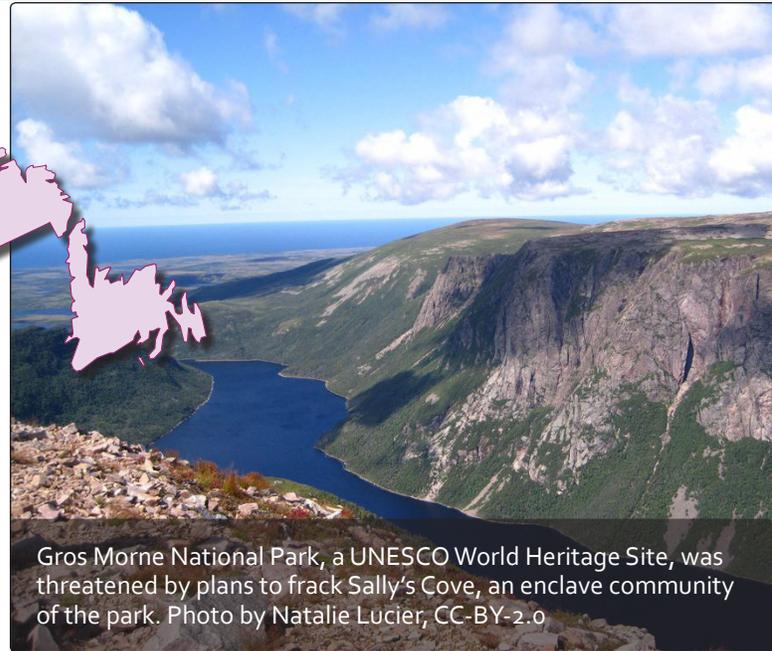
In March 2013, Shoal Point Energy Ltd. and Black Spruce Exploration Corp. had submitted a proposal to the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board (C-NLOPB) to perform onshore-to-offshore fracking for oil exploration in three sites along the west coast of Newfoundland. A month later, the C-NLOPB directed Shoal Point and Black Spruce to register their project with the province.

Black Spruce had negotiated a farm-in agreement for exploration with Shoal Point and will be responsible for any drilling program. Since the drilling is offshore-to-onshore, two approval bodies are involved: the C-NLOPB and the province. As of November 2013, no formal project proposal has been submitted to the province.

In the meantime, the C-NLOPB will run its assessment of the project in conjunction with the province.

Black Spruce now holds title to more than 280,000 hectares of land spanning three different licences along the west coast. In September 2012, Shoal Point Energy claimed that Green Point shale – the long and narrow stretch of shale rock along Western Newfoundland – is “one of the significant resources in North America.”¹⁸

¹⁸ www.huffingtonpost.ca/2012/09/09/shoal-point-energy-shale_n_1868189.html



Gros Morne National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was threatened by plans to frack Sally's Cove, an enclave community of the park. Photo by Natalie Lucier, CC-BY-2.0

Shoal Point Energy's consulting firm indicated that the shale is several times thicker than other formations, and has also been broken up a bit by shifting tectonic plates, making it more difficult to drill. Black Spruce Exploration has since announced it would like to see the west coast of Newfoundland transform into an oil industry with hundreds of wells along the coastline.

Opposition has been growing since the fall of 2012 when communities first learned about the project and the potential impacts of fracking on their communities. There are several groups along the coast concerned about fracking and a coalition of groups called “The Newfoundland and Labrador Fracking Awareness Network” was launched in the summer of 2013.¹⁹

Concerns include negative impacts on the more than \$1 billion tourism industry, the fisheries, as well as to human health and the environment. Newfoundland and Labrador currently has no regulations that deal specifically with fracking, and no facilities to manage fracking wastewater.

¹⁹ www.thetelegram.com/News/Local/2013-08-01/article-3335217/Moderate-fracking-awareness-group-created/1

A lot of public concern is focused on one location, Sally's Cove, which is located just north of Rocky Harbour and is fully encircled by Gros Morne National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Negative impacts due to construction and potential spills or leaks would impact Gros Morne directly. UNESCO has indicated it is concerned and wants to look over any environmental reviews before drilling starts to determine whether the park's status as a heritage site might be in jeopardy.²⁰

UNESCO representatives have announced they will visit Gros Morne to gain a better understanding of the situation.

A group from the Port au Port region hosted a public presentation that included experts from both sides, including then Natural Resources Minister Tom Marshall. Close to 400 concerned citizens attended the presentation. Since then, the group – with the support of others – has toured the region to give educational presentations in small communities along the west coast of Newfoundland. The topic has been in the media since November 2012. Public pressure on the government through letters to the editor, as well as letters to the C-NLOPB and provincial politicians, prompted Minister Marshall to visit the regions that were fracking at the time in order to understand the science of it before the government announced a temporary ban in November 2013. The government committed to conducting an internal review of regulations in other jurisdictions and an assessment of the geological impacts in Western Newfoundland, which would be followed by public consultations.

The province-wide Fracking Awareness Network has called for a halt on all current fracking projects. The network is insisting on a comprehensive, independent, science-based review, including a human health impact

²⁰ www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/story/2013/06/19/nl-unesco-gros-morne-fracking-619.html

analysis to fully understand the potential effects on the region. The network says this review should focus on protecting citizens and the environment.

GROUPS WORKING ON FRACKING

The Council of Canadians St. John's Chapter
www.facebook.com/SJCANADIANS

Merci Centre for Ecology and Justice
mercycentreforecologyandjustice.org

Newfoundland and Labrador Fracking Awareness Network
www.nlfan.ca

Port Au Port / Bay St. George Fracking Awareness Group
www.facebook.com/groups/471261759605852/586027944795899/?notif_t=like

Save Gros Morne & our West Coast
www.facebook.com/SaveGrosMorne
savewestcoastnl.wordpress.com

Sierra Club Atlantic
atlantic.sierraclub.ca

The Western Environment Centre
wecnl.wordpress.com

RESOURCES AND REGULATIONS

Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board
www.cnlopb.nl.ca

Department of Environment and Conservation
www.env.gov.nl.ca/env/waterres/

Department of Environment and Conservation - water approvals
www.env.gov.nl.ca/env/waterres/regulations/appforms/

Public registry of water licences
www.env.gov.nl.ca/env/waterres/regulations/waterrights/registry_of_water_rights.pdf