



# **Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc.** **BAN HYDRAULIC FRACTURING IN FLORIDA**

## **Position Statement**

Adopted January 14, 2015

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**Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc. is committed to banning the practice of hydraulic fracturing in Florida.**

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The oil and gas industry has surged over the past decade by employing new techniques and technologies that combine horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing—commonly known as fracking—to extract natural gas and oil otherwise unreachable with conventional technologies from underground rock formations. The process involves drilling vertically to reach the rock layer where the gas or oil exists, then drilling horizontally along the rock layer from the vertical wellbore. A mixture of water, sand and chemicals or “fracking fluid” is pumped into the well at extremely high pressure. The pressure is powerful enough to fracture the surrounding rock, creating fissures and cracks through which trapped reservoirs of gas and oil are released. The gas and oil are pumped back to the surface, along with millions of gallons of “flowback.” Flowback is a mix of recovered fracking fluid and “produced waters” or water released from the underground rock formations along with the gas and oil. Flowback contains harmful contaminants, such as naturally occurring radioactivity, heavy metals, hydrocarbons, brine and other toxins. This wastewater is stored on the fracking site in pits, injected in deep underground disposal wells or trucked off-site for treatment prior to discharge to surface waters.

Despite the fact that there is substantial evidence that enormous volumes of wastewater degrades the environment and endangers public health, no federal or state laws regulate the handling, storage, treatment or disposal of fracking waste. Gas and oil production wastes are exempt from the disclosure requirements for hazardous waste under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. Attending physicians, researchers and public agencies are not necessarily privy to the toxicological and epidemiological information necessary to understand the scope, scale and long-term implications of exposure to the chemical additives in fracking fluids. Drilling sites are also exempt from the laws limiting the emissions of toxic airborne pollutants under the Clean Air Act, even though wastewater left in open air pits to evaporate, releases harmful volatile organic compounds into the atmosphere, polluting the air and contributing to acid rain and ground level ozone. Where catastrophic spills of fracking chemicals and wastes have contaminated soil and surface waters, drilling operators are exempt from any liability under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (a.k.a. Superfund Act), which holds most industries accountable for cleaning up hazardous waste.

There are no wastewater treatment methods in wide use that recondition water to an acceptable quality for surface discharge. Municipal sewage facilities merely dilute hazardous chemicals and other pollutants, rather than remove them. Private industrial treatment facilities are better able to precipitate metals and filter out suspended solids, but removing dissolved salts, in particular, require expensive distillation or reverse osmosis processes. Disposal of toxic wastewater in deep underground injection wells is a common practice. Disposal wells are tubes of concrete and steel that extend deep into the earth, and at the bottom, the wells open into a natural rock formation. There is no container. Waste simply seeps out. According to recent studies, the extreme pressure of deep well injection can cause underground rock layers to crack, accelerating the migration of wastewater into aquifers. Once toxic compounds leach into groundwater, vital drinking water resources may be contaminated irreparably. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has no hard data on how many underground disposal wells are leaking dangerous chemicals. The Energy Policy of 2005 expressly exempts fracking operations from the provisions of the Safe Drinking Water Act, effectively removing the authority of the EPA to regulate the underground injection of hazardous substances so that these materials do not endanger underground sources of drinking water.

Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc. recognizes that the millions of gallons of water used in fracking operations not only strain water resources, but end up as vast amounts of polluted wastewater. To protect Florida aquifers, reservoirs, rivers, streams, wetlands, lakes and ponds and recharge areas, Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc. supports the following:

### **To Ban Hydraulic Fracturing in Florida**

- Permanently halt or prohibit the initiation of gas and oil extraction using hydraulic fracturing (fracking) of horizontally drilled wells
- Permanently halt or prohibit the initiation of hydraulic fracturing (fracking) operations on public lands, which are not only home to the last remaining wild places in Florida, but public and private drinking water supplies for millions of people
- Permanently halt or prohibit the initiation of treating, discharging, disposing and storing of waste from hydraulic fracturing (fracking) operations
- Repeal oil and gas industry exemptions from the National Environmental Policy Act, Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, Superfund Act, and Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act

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**Charter Member of National Garden Clubs, Inc.**

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