

Groups organize fracking meeting

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Is hydraulic fracturing from oil and gas development harming the Poudre River?

The Fort Collins chapter of the Sierra Club and Save the Poudre are convinced it could be, and they're bringing a former U.S. Environmental Protection Agency scientist to the Fort Collins Brewery on Saturday to talk about it.

Self-proclaimed EPA whistleblower Wes Wilson, who exposed flaws in an EPA study of the dangers of hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking," will talk about the ways oil and gas development and the energy companies' fracking techniques could be polluting groundwater and the Poudre River.

"Millions of gallons of fracking fluids are left underground," said Gary Wockner, executive director of Save the Poudre. "There's a long-term question about whether those will ever impact drinking water supplies or impact public health."

The oil and gas industry, Gov. John Hickenlooper and U.S. Sen. Mark Udall, D-Colo., all claim that fracking is safe, but the Hickenlooper administration is in the process of writing a state rule requiring energy companies to disclose all the ingredients of fracking fluids, which are often considered trade secrets.

Fracking is a technique the companies use to fracture underground rock formations to release trapped oil and natural gas. It's a process that's been used for decades in Colorado, but with new energy development spreading across East Coast states and encroaching closer to communities in some areas, questions have been raised over its safety after people living near drilling operations have complained of health problems.

The fluid used for fracking, usually a cocktail containing sand, water and other chemicals, has been known to include some cancer-causing agents. Some companies disclose many of the ingredients of their fracking fluids on the website www.fracfocus.org.

Nearly all new oil and gas wells drilled in Larimer and Weld counties will be fracked, according to the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission.

Wockner said fracking is occurring next to the Poudre River in some places, and that

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should be a concern to all who use the river for drinking water and recreation.

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