NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Catholic Climate Covenant examines the latest in fracking news

Sharon Abercrombie | Jul. 9, 2012 Eco Catholic

The dioceses of Cleveland and Youngstown, Ohio, sponsored a daylong seminar on hydraulic fracturing (fracking) June 27, reports Catholic Climate Covenant on its website.

More than 100 concerned Catholics turned out to hear pros and cons on the topic from Peter MacKenzie of the Ohio Oil and Gas Association, a trade group representing oil and gas producers around the state; John Stolz, a professor of environmental microbiology at Duquesne University in Pennsylvania; and Dr. Jame Schaefer, associate professor of theology at Marquette University and author of *Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics: Reconstructing Patristic and Medieval Concepts*.

The Catholic Climate Covenant website also features two comprehensive reports on the meeting -- a Vindy.com news story account and an in-depth essay penned by Catholic blogger Bill Patenaude. In "Cracking Open the Depths," Patenaude lays out [1] the dangers of the technology and his own ecologically positive experiences as a regulator for the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management.

"Sometimes companies can do very good things -- and do so out of sincere love of neighbor," he writes.

One of Patenaude's own office chiefs recalled how a private engineering firm he worked for in the 1970s took the initiative to inform its clients about the dangers of groundwater contamination at the Love Canal and breakthroughs in water-testing technologies.

"While there were no government regulations at the time -- no demands from Big Brother to dictate how much water-supply companies went about their business, the firm's managers felt a moral responsibility to factor this new information into their clients' designs, even if there was a cost to the company," the columnist writes.

Patenaude has shared similar information regarding climate change and projected sea level rises to his fellow wastewater engineers and scientists during recent meetings. Much of the information was new to them, and they were stunned. "What's next?" one workshop facilitator asked. The group's response was to react positively and pass along what they had learned to the design community.

The author asks: Couldn't there be similar responses among companies that engage in fracking?

He concludes: "While actively educating our neighbors about the dangers of fracking, and while actively demanding companies to act responsibility -- that they love thy neighbor -- and do so immediately, we must also love the people that are causing the harms from fracking."

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Links:
[1] http://catholicecology.blogspot.com/2012/06/cracking-open-depths.html