



Of fracking, wells, land and water

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The drilling technique known as fracking is poisoning water across the country right? Wrong, reports the Wall Street Journal . Turns out it isn't the drilling but faulty well construction, specifically cement that has caused some water sources -- like shallow aquifers -- to become contaminated. Even environmentalists agree.

A. Scott Anderson, a senior policy adviser with the Environmental Defense Fund says "The groundwater pollution incidents that have come to light to date have all been caused by well construction problems."

So Pennsylvania, New York and Ohio have instituted new laws regarding proper well construction in order to prevent water contamination.

But that hasn't prevented some communities in Pennsylvania and New York from banning hydraulic fracturing all together. Towns like Dryden and Middlefield have enacted fracking bans that have been upheld by a NY state judge. Banning fracking in New York before the state has even decided whether to allow fracking would seem like killing a great economic opportunity, doesn't it?

Wrong again, says Peter van Doren of the Cato Institute. "Nothing wrong with this kind of differences, with different [localities] coming to different conclusions." According to van Doren, whereas some areas of New York state may ban fracking other cities and municipalities will see it as an opportunity and allow it. Across a state that will balance itself out over time. "In large geographic areas you don't want to enact bans because that's a market distortion but smaller localities [it can be alright]," van Doren says.

He also has a bright idea about the effect on individuals in a given area. "Local fracking bans don't bother me so much" says van Doren. The "losers in this are individual property owners who would have been willing to accept natural gas drilling because they've lost money. Majority should compensate those who would have wanted to get paid for drilling," van Doren explains. He means collecting a tax from the community to "compensate" the individual land owners who wanted the drilling. Wanna take bets on whether the folks in Dryden or Middlefield will take up that challenge?