

Beware fracking pitfalls

Texas ex-mayor warns

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COLUMBUS

The former mayor of a small Texas town is warning Gov. John Kasich and state lawmakers to beware the fracking pitfalls his community has experienced.

“There is going to be some impact,” said Calvin Tillman, formerly of Dish, Texas. “Even at best, you have an industrialized area and you have ... the truck traffic and the heavy equipment and the noise and odors and the dust and things like that. At worst, you have people who have contaminated water wells and you have air pollution from these treatment facilities and these compression stations and condensate tanks that leak and things like that.”

He added, “The question would be, do you want what has happened to us to happen to you? And if not, then what are you going to do to prevent that?”

Tillman and Dish, a community of about 200 people near Dallas, were featured in the documentary “Gasland,” a movie about the dangers horizontal hydraulic fracturing that is frequently cited by state lawmakers and others who oppose fracking, a process in which water and sand are blasted into rock far below ground to unlock oil and natural gas..

Tillman spoke to reporters at the Ohio Statehouse on Friday during a stop in Columbus.

Proponents say fracking will increase energy production in the state, add funds to the state coffers and promote job creation and economic growth in drilling-related industries. They also say that hydraulic fracturing has been in use in the state and country for decades and is safe thanks to existing regulations.

But opponents want a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing until adequate safeguards are in place to protect the environment. Such calls have increased in recent weeks, given seismic activity in the Youngstown area that could be tied to an injection well used to dispose of waste fluids from oil and gas production.

Kasich has said repeatedly that his administration is working to ensure Ohio has the regulations in place to protect the environment. He’s mentioned the possibility of impact fees to help

communities cover roadwork and other costs associated with the industry. He's also said he doesn't want Ohio's regulatory environment to be so extreme that it drives the fracking industry away.

"We can have economic success in hydraulic fracturing and at the same time be able to preserve the environment," Kasich told reporters in Columbus earlier this week. "It cannot be a choice of one or the other."

Tillman said horizontal hydraulic fracturing has been in use in and around Dish for more than a decade, with 20 or so production wells within the community and 50-60 within a half-mile of its borders. With those wells have come pipelines, compression stations and gas-treatment facilities.

"Every single place I've been to says, 'We have the regulation infrastructure to take care of this.' If I had a nickel for every time someone has told me that, I'd be rich because I hear it everywhere, and I have yet to see it prevent a lot of the things that you hear about."

Tillman urged state officials to thoroughly research the industry in advance, including environmental groups and others in those discussions.

"Am I coming up here to tell you to do this or not to do this? Absolutely not," he said. "That's a decision that people in Ohio have to make. I can tell you what happened in Dish, and you can make that decision based on trying to figure out the entire story."

North Carolina gets a Texas-sized warning on fracking



<http://www.southernstudies.org/2012/06/north-carolina-gets-a-texas-sized-warning-on-fracking.html>

As North Carolina lawmakers prepare to pass a [bill](#) as soon as this week legalizing fracking for natural gas, they got a visit from a former Texas mayor who shared his cautionary tale about the serious problems the industry brought to his small town.

Calvin Tillman was elected mayor of Dish, Texas -- a community of about 200 residents 25 miles north of Fort Worth -- in 2007, at a time when fracking was booming in the area. Dish sits atop the Barnett Shale, which is one of the largest natural gas fields in the United States. Ten massive pipelines run through the town, carrying about a billion cubic feet of gas per day.

Tillman spent much of his time in office fighting to regulate the gas companies, which transformed his once-quiet community into a noisy, polluted industrial center. He finally moved away last year after his two young sons began waking in the middle of the night with severe nosebleeds that the family believes were related to toxic air emissions from the drilling operations.

Before Tillman left, he offered to rent his home to a gas company executive so they could see what it was like to live in the industry's midst.

"None took me up on it," he says.

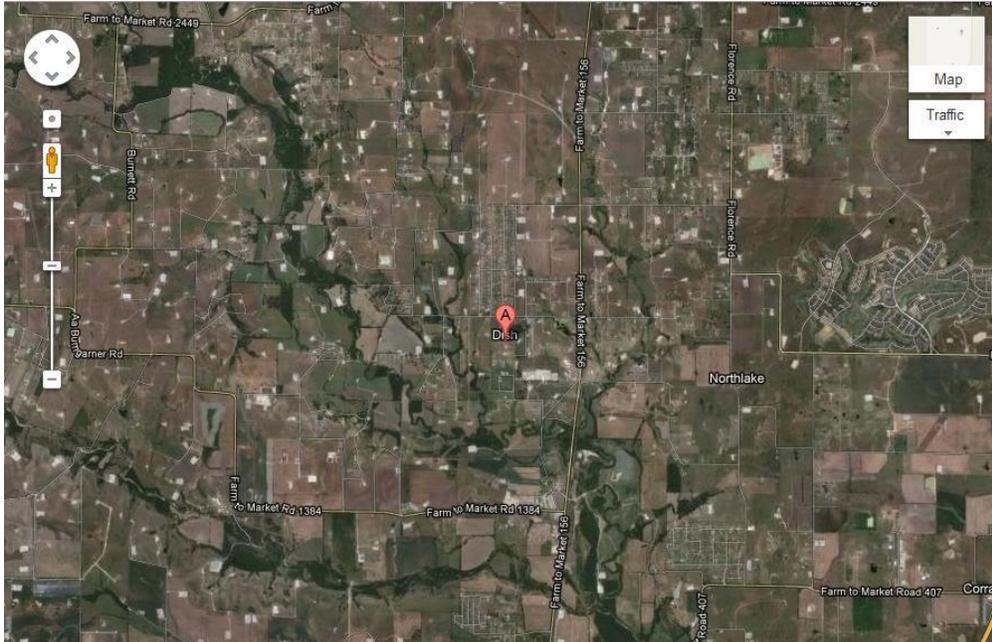
Tillman, who [appeared](#) in the award-winning fracking documentary "[Gasland](#)," now works with a nonprofit group he founded called [ShaleTest](#), which does environmental testing for lower-income families and communities affected by natural gas drilling. He visited North Carolina this week to talk about his experiences, meeting with about a dozen state lawmakers.

"I want to let everybody know there's more to this than they're being told by the industry," he says.

Tillman was no stranger to oil and gas drilling when he arrived in Dish in 2003 following service in the military. He grew up in Oklahoma, where his father worked for a time on oil rigs, and he attended high school in a town called Oilton, where he witnessed firsthand the industry's boom-bust cycles.

Tillman was elected to serve as a town commissioner in 2005, when Dish was still known as Clark. (It changed its name that year as part of a deal to get free TV service for residents from the Dish Satellite Network.)

It was around that time that fracking, as Tillman puts it, "went berserk" in the area. This satellite photo shows numerous white rectangles in and around the community -- all of them gas-industry operations (*click on photo for a larger version*):



Especially worrisome for Tillman and other residents of Dish was the air pollution coming from the operations, including a gas treatment facility near Tillman's home. As production intensified, the chemical stink from the facility grew stronger.

"The odor got to the point where it was uncomfortable to be outside," he says. "Your eyes would be burning."

It was around this time that his sons -- now 7 and 9 -- began experiencing severe nosebleeds even in their sleep, when the problem couldn't be explained by rough play. Tillman also began hearing other residents' stories about nosebleeds that seemed to correlate with the intensity of the odors.

Tillman tried to work with the industry to address the problem. Their solution involved sending a worker out to drive around town for a few hours with a methane detector, after which they declared there was no problem.

Disgusted with the industry's inaction, Tillman contacted a local environmental consulting firm called Wolf Eagle Environmental. The town contracted with the company to conduct a serious [air pollution study](#) -- and its conclusions were disturbing:

"Air analysis performed in the Town of DISH confirmed the presence in high concentrations of carcinogenic and neurotoxin compounds in ambient air near and/or on residential properties. The compounds in the air indicate quantities in excess of what would normally be anticipated in ambient air in an urban residential or rural residential area."

Many of the toxic compounds were detected at levels higher than those set by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for short- and long-term health effects.

Among the chemicals the study found at dangerously high levels were benzene, a known cancer-causing chemical that was detected in one sample at 55 times the Texas standard for long-term

health effects. Naphthalene, a potential human carcinogen, was found at levels 3.6 times the standard. Detected levels of xylenes, potent neurotoxins, were double the long-term health standard.

Other chemicals found at levels exceeding TCEQ's health standards were dimethyl sulfide, methyl ethyl disulfide, ethyl-methyl-disulfide, trimethyl benzene, 1,2,4-trimethyl benzene, carbonyl sulfide, carbon disulfide, methyl pyridine and dimethyl pyridine.

In response, TCEQ conducted its own [study](#), testing blood and urine samples from 28 people living in or near Dish. While it did find elevated levels of some toxic compounds in people's bodies, it attributed those to other exposures such as cigarette smoking and household cleaning products. However, TCEQ acknowledged that its study had limitations -- including the fact that it was based on a one-time sample even though the compounds of concern typically stay in the body for only a few hours.

TCEQ's findings did not assuage Tillman's worries. When his sons suffered three severe nosebleeds in the middle of the night during a single week in late May 2010, he decided to leave. In March 2011 the family moved to Aubrey, Texas -- 15 miles from the nearest gas well. Since then, he reports, his sons have not experienced a single middle-of-the-night nosebleed.

But it's not only the health impact of fracking that upset Tillman. As a conservative who was a registered Republican until he became disgusted over former Vice President Dick Cheney's role in securing the ["Halliburton loophole"](#) exempting fracking fluid ingredients from disclosure under environmental laws, Tillman is offended by the impact the gas industry has on private property rights. He says that the bill North Carolina is considering is especially troubling on that front.

"This is an atrocity for private-property rights," says Tillman, now a political independent. "Anyone who votes for this bill should have to hand in their conservative cards and take Ronald Reagan's picture off their wall."

He points to the section of [N.C. Senate Bill 820](#) that authorizes what's known as ["forced pooling."](#) a controversial legal tool that allows drillers to gain access to mineral rights beneath someone's property without his permission, as long as a certain percentage of his neighbors sign gas leases.

"This is the worst forced pooling bill I've seen," Tillman says. "Your state is giving corporations the authority to come and take your property from you."

He also points out that North Carolina's bill takes away local governments' ability to regulate fracking in their communities -- an insult to his conservative belief in local control.

Tillman urges North Carolina lawmakers to give more careful consideration to what they're getting the state into. But that's looking increasingly unlikely, with the House Environment Committee approving the bill without public comment the morning after Tillman flew back to

Texas. The full House is expected to take up the bill -- a version of which has already passed the Senate -- as early as today.

"Everybody needs to slow down," Tillman warns. "The shale's been down there for a million years, and it'll still be there in a million more."

(Photo of Tillman is a still from "Gasland.")

Experts deliver dire warnings about fracking impacts

<http://www.athensnews.com/ohio/article-35956-experts-deliver-dire-warnings-about-fracking-impacts.html>

[By Jim Phillips](#)



Photo Credits: Photo by Jim Phillips.

Photo Caption: Calvin Tillman, former mayor of Dish, TX, spoke to a crowd about the affects of franking in his community during a lecture at Morton Hall on Saturday.

Hundreds of people packed a lecture hall at Ohio University Saturday to hear some fairly dire warnings on what could happen to Athens County if the oil-and-gas industry begins to drill into deep underground shale beds here using the horizontal hydraulic fracturing method ("fracking").

Calvin Tillman, former mayor of a town that has been through the process, said his town of Dish, Texas – which has seen fracking conducted nearby by multiple big companies – has suffered massive impacts, including noise, odors and unhealthy chemical contamination.

Tillman, who said his north Texas town has become "kind of Grand Central Station" for a number of facilities involved in drilling for, drying and odorizing natural gas, appeared in the controversial documentary film "Gasland," which has played a major part in stirring up opposition to fracking.

He told a packed house in OU's Morton Hall that he decided to move from Dish, after his children began to suffer nosebleeds that he believes were linked to pollution by chemicals such as benzene.

"Since we have moved... my children have not had any nosebleeds in the middle of the night," Tillman said. He acknowledged that he sometimes feels guilty, as though he abandoned his town, but noted that he is not the only homeowner who has been forced to make this decision.

"I didn't want to be sitting before a doctor one day, having that conversation about my children," he said.

Most in the audience seemed highly receptive to Tillman's concerns about fracking, though the event was also attended by about 16 members of a union that represents workers who do infrastructure work in oil and gas development. The members of Local 18 of the International Union of Operating Engineers, who stand to gain jobs from a fracking boom, expressed skepticism about Tillman's claims, and those of another speaker, chemist S. Thomas Bond.

Union member Primo Panzarello complained that any type of proposed energy source – even windmills – seems to generate protest. Another union member, who would not give her name, added that those who oppose fracking seem not to understand that modern society has huge and growing energy needs.

"Are we going to go back to pre-industrial America?" she asked. "Can we become a nation of shepherders?" Yet another suggested that anti-fracking protesters seem to believe our nation's energy can come from "unicorn farts and glitter."

TILLMAN SAID HE BELIEVES the oil-and-gas industry, as well as landowners and other citizens, would benefit from tighter regulation and more transparency in the drilling process. He said when citizens of the tiny town of Dish first started complaining about smells, noise and other nuisances related to the fracking operations, "I complained to everyone that would listen to me" in state government. "There were hundreds of complaints filed."

Though regulatory agencies did sampling for contamination, he said, the amounts of chemicals they found were contradicted by studies the town paid for itself.

Another skeptic in the audience was Daniel Alfaro of Energy In Depth, a group that describes itself as "a research, education and public outreach campaign focused on getting the facts out about the promise and potential of responsibly developing America's onshore energy resource."

Alfaro handed out summaries of a report issued in May 2010 by the Texas Department of State Health Services, which found that Dish residents had levels of volatile organic compounds in their blood that were "similar to (the) general population," and were "not consistent with community-wide exposure." (The summary also stated, however, that the agency "cannot state the exact nature of the exposures.")

Tillman, however, insisted that independent studies paid for by the town show higher contamination levels than the state found. "I carry all these studies around, because some people may insinuate that I'm being untruthful," he said.

He also warned that acceptable exposure levels are based on healthy adult males, and may be more dangerous for children or pregnant women.

Showing a map indicating the large number of drilling and related facilities surrounding Dish, Tillman predicted that if the industry comes here, "that is what Athens is going to look like in 15 years... Eventually, you'll be there."

While some tout the job-creating potential of fracking, Tillman said he believes such jobs in Athens County will employ experienced workers, and mainly for companies from Oklahoma and Texas. "They're probably not going to be from Ohio," he predicted.

He stressed that he's not telling local people to support or oppose fracking, but to learn the facts and decide their priorities.

"Is 1 part per billion of benzene (in your air, soil or water) too much? That's for you to decide," he said. "There is going to be some impact... You just have to decide, is the juice worth the squeeze."

Bond, a retired teacher from West Virginia with a doctorate in inorganic chemistry, was scathing about the oil-and-gas industry and those who regulate it, suggesting that whenever a drilling operation fouls someone's land, there is a "presumption of innocence" that puts the nearly impossible burden of proof on the landowner.

He advised landowners to get testing done on their water supplies to establish baseline conditions, so that contamination can be more easily demonstrated. "You need professional help, which may be expensive," he added.

Bond also expressed deep skepticism about the wild economic growth claims being made for shale drilling.

In what he called an "expensive, very highly speculative investment," Bond said, companies are acting simply to lock up as much potential reserves as they can. At this point, he suggested, horizontal hydro-fracking is an "immature, very dirty process," and will be used in an inefficient way that won't even fully extract the oil and gas in shale beds.

"It is in the nature of resource extraction that easy pickings are taken first," he said.

Bond said oil companies are pouring vastly more speculative money into the frack-leasing boom than went into the now-collapsed U.S. housing boom, and are also spending enormous sums to sway the political and regulatory process.

"It is your property against one of the greatest concentrations of wealth ever known," he warned. "Stick your head in the sand, and they will cover up the other end."

While oil and gas companies have been locking up mineral rights in Athens County, no permit applications have been filed with the state agency that reviews and approves permits.

Former Texas mayor recounts ‘fracking’ battle

<http://thepost.ohiou.edu/content/former-texas-mayor-recounts-%E2%80%98fracking%E2%80%99-battle>

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News Section:



Calvin Tillman, former mayor of Dish, Texas, speaks in Morton Auditorium about his experience with the oil and gas industry, paying particular attention to hydraulic fracturing. (Katharine Egli | Picture Editor)

By

Kelly Gifford

First it was the smell — an annoyance that concerned the residents of the small Texas town. But when the nosebleeds began, Calvin Tillman realized he needed to investigate the effects of hydraulic fracturing.

Featured in the documentary Gasland, the former mayor of Dish, Texas, shared his political and personal battles with fracking with more than 200 people in Morton Hall Saturday, including residents, city officials, and members of the oil and gas industry.

Alongside him, inorganic chemist Thomas Bond spoke about the many myths of the drilling's benefits.

A consortium of anti-fracking residents asked Bond and Tillman to visit Athens. Dish is located in the center of the Barnett Shale formation and became the central hub for natural-gas transfer pipelines. When a foul odor began to fill the air, Tillman requested an air-quality test. When the test results were vague and the oil and gas companies refused to listen to him, Tillman took matters into his own hands and did his own assessment.

“We spent 15 percent of our town's already-tiny budget to get a large air-quality test done,” Tillman said. “Our test showed that countless carcinogens were being released into the air.”

While waiting for the results, Tillman's children began to wake up with nosebleeds, which were later linked to spikes in chemicals in the air. After acquiring a copy of the initial results, Tillman realized that his independent test showed the same results.

While Tillman focused his talk on his experience with air pollution, Bond spoke about the many other types of environmental contamination that could result from drilling, such as soil and water pollution.

Bond said it is easy for companies to skate by without negative consequences because of the phrasing of laws and the many loopholes in the legislation.

“(The oil and gas) industry is in the innocent-until-proven-guilty mindset,” Bond said.

Dish also has experienced water and soil contamination from leakages and the open pits used for the disposal of excess chemicals used during the drilling technique.

Along with the environmental dangers presented, Tillman and Bond also spoke about the economic myths the oil and gas industry promote.

Tillman said many people in Dish have not seen the financial benefits that were promised to them upon signing their leases because many did not own their mineral rights.

“Many of the mineral rights owners don't even live in Texas anymore,” Tillman said. “They just get the money because they own what's under the ground.”

State Rep. Debbie Phillips, D-92nd, who attended the meeting to gain additional insight on fracking, said she would caution any landowner against leasing.

“You need to make sure you have everything together before you sign on the dotted line,” Phillips said.

Both Tillman and Bond also warned attendees of the reality of having an oil and gas company working on their properties and said the companies do not prioritize respect for people’s land.

“To get to what they want, they have to be on the surface somewhere, even if they said they are only going to be on a small portion of your property,” Tillman said.

Officials from American Energy Ohio, an oil and gas company, were in attendance but declined to comment about the presentation.

Though Tillman is no longer the mayor of Dish, he and some colleagues have started a nonprofit organization, Shale Test, which helps fund air, soil and water testing for contaminants.

In the end, Tillman decided to leave Dish to ensure his family’s health. Although the decision was a difficult one, it has proved a beneficial one so far: His children’s nosebleeds have stopped.

“Sometimes you have to ask yourself: Is the juice worth the sweets?” Tillman said.

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