

FRACKING SURVEY 2012

Report on NGO and Philanthropic Efforts to Address Impacts of Hydraulic Fracturing

February 2013

In October 2012 the Health & Environmental Funders Network (HEFN) surveyed non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and philanthropic foundations addressing public health, environmental, and community impacts of oil and gas extraction through hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) across the United States. The objective was to compile an initial snapshot of activities and needs emerging in response to the spread of this industrial activity. A total of 81 NGOs and 33 foundations took part in the survey, including many of the organizations most active on this issue. This report summarizes survey results and findings.

Rapid Engagement, Philanthropic Dependence

Engagement of NGOs and foundations on this issue is growing rapidly. The NGOs surveyed reported spending a total of \$17.4 million in 2012; they hope to expand that investment of effort to more than double that figure in 2013.

The foundations surveyed reported investing a combined total of \$18.3 million in fracking-related grants in 2012. Foundation respondents also projected an increase in their grantmaking on fracking in 2013, but by only a small amount. Significant additional increases in philanthropic support or other revenue would be required to meet field aspirations and sustain its growth.

Survey results found that philanthropic support has been critical for NGOs working on fracking. Some 65% of nonprofit expenditures on fracking in 2012 were supported by foundation grants, as compared to just 14.3% of 2011 expenditures for the whole U.S. environmental non-profit sector.¹ Survey comments underscored this reliance on grant revenue and flagged concerns about its sustainability:

“Funders have a tendency to stampede from fad to fad, resulting in a ‘boom and bust’ cycle of funding that prevents success. As with any issue, success will come based on long-term commitment of resources. Jumping in with big piles of cash and demanding deliverable results on a one- or two-year timeframe is both unrealistic and an obstacle to success.” –NGO respondent

The 81 NGO respondents reported a total of 254 full-time equivalent staff working on fracking issues. The median number of dedicated issue staff per organization, however, was just 1.5, and the median expenditure on fracking-related work was just \$75,000. These findings suggest a diverse nonprofit landscape with many small and local-level groups involved.

Most Activity at State or Local Level

Both NGO and funder respondents reported a primary focus on state or local activity, with 68.6% of NGO expenditure directed to this community-focused work, along with 83% of foundation grants.

¹ *Straughan, B., and Pollak, T., The Broader U.S. Environmental Movement: Composition and Funding Insights, New York: Environmental Grantmakers Association, 2011.*

Figure 1: Activity by State

States in which at least 5 respondents reported fracking-related activity

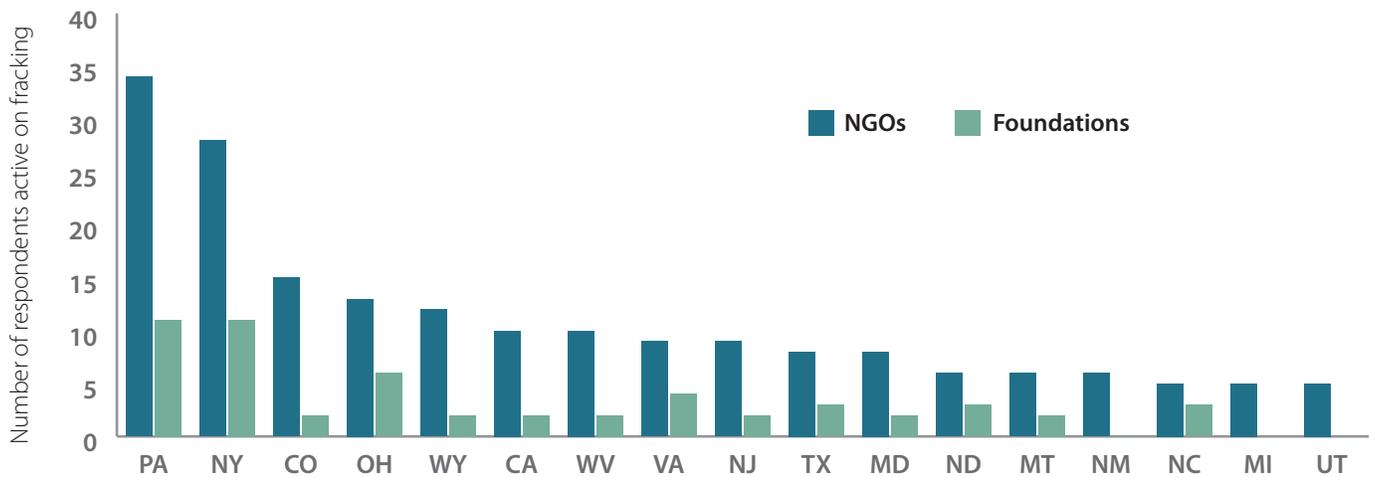
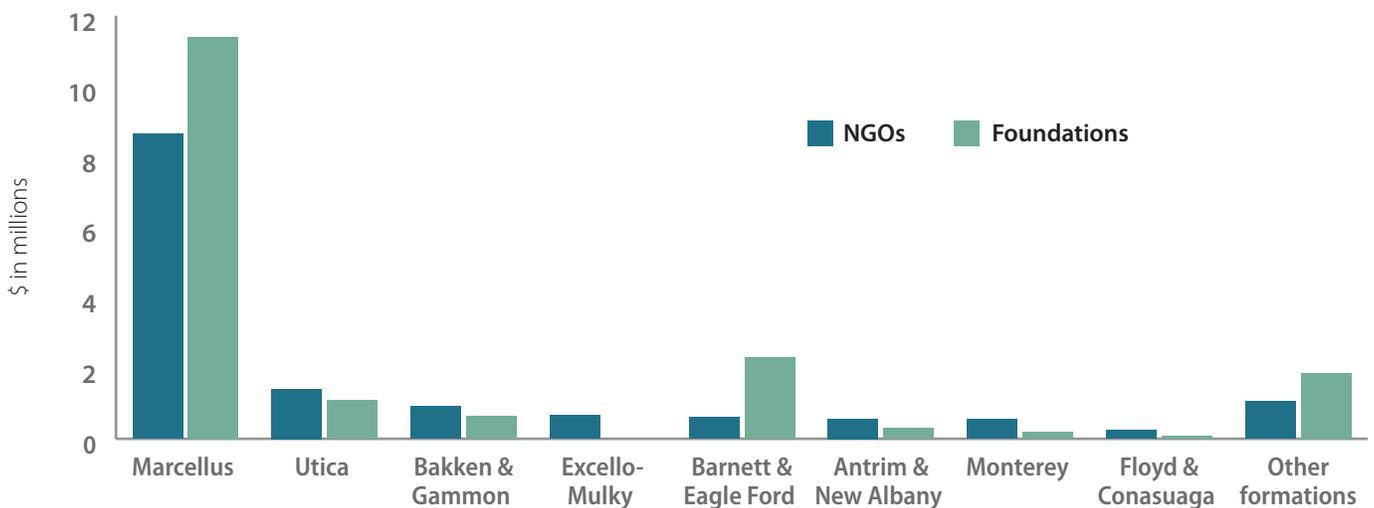


Figure 2: Activity by Shale Formation

Allocation of 2012 fracking expenditure among shale formations



The survey found some level of NGO activity in 43 out of the 50 U.S. states. In states with the most NGO activity, upwards of 25 different groups reported engagement. The survey also found that the majority of 2012 NGO and foundation expenditures on fracking-related work were focused on the Marcellus Shale formation. By contrast, in other states there was NGO activity reported without any corresponding foundation investment.

“The strength of the fracking movement is its grassroots power...” –NGO respondent

Strong Alignment of Motivations and Goals

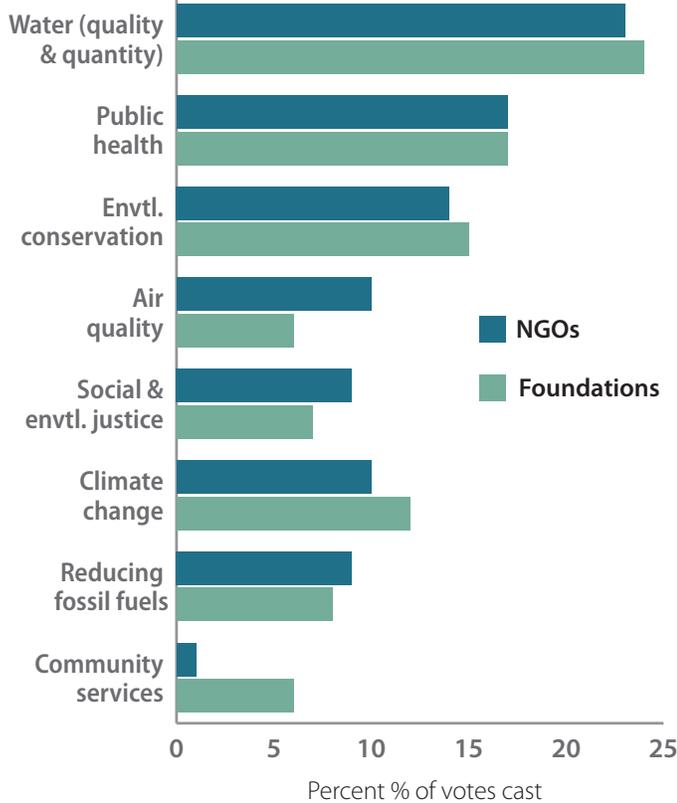
When asked about their motivations for engaging on this issue, there was striking alignment among funders and advocates. Both cited top concerns about water quality, public health, and environmental conservation.

“At the national level, both political parties focus on domestic energy production, with little regard to costs.” –NGO respondent

“While the public wants clean air, clean water and to protect our wild places, the gas drilling industry spends money hand-over-fist to sway decision makers.” –NGO respondent

Figure 3: Motivations

Issues motivating work on fracking
(receiving 5% or more of all votes)



The survey also found strong alignment between NGO and foundation respondents about the outcomes being sought. Both sectors pointed to promoting better public understanding of the impacts of fracking as a top priority (receiving 43.9% of NGO votes and 44.7% of those from foundations).

Varying Emphases on Tactics

The survey found more divergence among nonprofits and foundations regarding the tactics they are prioritizing. The NGO respondents gave highest priority to communications work and raising public awareness, whereas foundations reported looking more towards policy and regulatory reform in order to secure change. Responses about forthcoming priorities also suggested potential convergence around tactics, as many foundation respondents identified a need for increased investment in communications work.

“Much of the advocacy on this issue occurs via communications (events, social media, news publications), and NGOs need to bolster their skills in this area.”—NGO respondent

More Field Capacity and Connections Sought

The survey asked several questions relating to funding needs in the field. As illustrated in Figure 5, respondents identified various needs for additional resources, with information, research, organizing, and communications capacity all seen as priorities. Most respondents reported a sense that NGOs are doing strong grassroots work, and that even more capacity of this kind is needed in order to expand public outreach and constituency engagement.

While the survey found mixed views on the need for a new national campaign, there was broad enthusiasm for the idea of national meetings to facilitate networking, learning and strategizing among NGOs in the field, as well as for better field access to resources like speakers’ bureaus, technical expertise, and litigation capacity.

Figure 4: Tactics

Strategies used in work on fracking

