

Dear Editor,

I wanted to respond to Jackie Heyda's recent newsletter column about reclamation of drilling areas in Colo. She refers to a supplement in the Sunday *Denver Post* which claims that the oil and gas industry is re-vegetating natural areas spoiled by drilling and fracking. She concludes that since the articles are so informative, they are "giving hope that the companies involved are doing their best for the environment and conservation of the land."

I must point out that this supplement is not a section of the Sunday paper, although it is deceptively-designed to look like one. It is in fact advertising paid 100% by the gas and oil industry, under the guise of a new group they've formed called Coloradans for Responsible Energy Development. All of the articles in it are written by industry insiders and 100% favorable to the industry!

In other words, any claims about the good works done by gas and oil operators found in this "Energy and Environment" supplement should be viewed with suspicion. In fact the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Sierra Club initiated a petition drive against the *Denver Post* for the deceptive nature of the supplement, pointing out that it is near impossible for the paper to report accurately on the subject of gas and oil development if they are receiving this type of advertising revenue from the operators themselves.

The industry, for its part, seems motivated by fear of ballot initiatives that may appear before CO voters this fall. Frustrated by gas and oil development's impact on human health, wildlife, and the environment, CO citizens are seeking additional safety regulation of the industry through the ballot, rather than through legislative channels that have so far been unsuccessful. The industry has ramped up their efforts to prevent public approval of any ballot measures, and thus, residents will see many public relations campaigns funded by these companies to convince voters about the safety of fracking and other gas and oil operations.

With the classic David and Goliath battle heating up in CO this fall, it is important that we consider the source of any information about the subject. The gas and oil industry has a lot of money to spend, but industry-produced pieces are likely to be inaccurate, as they are in the Post's advertising supplement. You will also see similar ads on MSNBC, CNN and PBS. Anti-fracking pieces, like the movies *Split Estate*, *Gasland* and *Gasland 2*, also have their point of view, but they may be more accurate for stories about how individuals have been impacted by gas and oil development near their homes. Unfortunately the CO Health Dept. has no studies of its own, which may be more impartial, and a bill to conduct such a study in Weld County was killed in the legislature this spring.

My personal feeling about fracking is that because it is exempt from major sections of many Federal environmental laws, like the Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Air Act, the environmental problems it can cause are pushed onto states and local communities to address. Most of these local government bodies are incapable of regulating these activities safely, they lack the resources and knowledge, and of course, they want the revenue for their communities. We are already dealing with drought throughout the west, and the immense amount of water required for fracking is also a concern on mine. My feeling is that until the industry loopholes are closed at the federal level, I would prefer to limit gas and oil development in our area as I am concerned about its health impacts. A quick trip to Weld County and a whiff of the air there will tell you that the environment has been fouled by drilling, and I am sure this has also had a big impact on the wildlife around the well sites.

Where can a person find accurate information? I would suggest looking to the wildlife groups that we support, including the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society. While you may have to do your own

research to get the facts, at least you know they are coming from a credible organization that shares your same values for conservation and preservation of bird habitat.

Sincerely,

Cyndy Kulp  
Aiken Audubon Member