

PROPOSED 'FRACKING' GUIDELINES

Activists want rules on drilling tightened

By [Allison Manning](#)*The Columbus Dispatch* Wednesday December 14, 2011 5:19 AM

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Environmental advocates are pushing back at proposed state oversight rules for oil and gas drilling in Ohio's Utica shale.

The Natural Resources Defense Council sent its response, signed by more than 20 groups and individuals, to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, pushing the agency to make the rules more clear and stringent for horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking."

Suggestions range from how long cement should be left to set, to giving proper training and drilling notice to inspectors who will have the final say at drill sites.

The comments stress that Ohio should look to neighboring Pennsylvania, where drilling in Marcellus shale began in 2005.

"Let's learn the lessons from states like Pennsylvania and states out West that have had years of experience and years of mishaps concerning deep shale drilling," said Trent Dougherty, director of legal affairs for the Ohio Environmental Council, one of the groups signing on to the rules response.

An ODNR spokesman said that the staff was compiling a report on the comments received before Monday's deadline, and that report was not immediately available.

Richard Sahli, an environmental attorney and principal author of the Natural Resources Defense Council's response, said the state's draft rules should be much tougher.

"These standards are just too weak, and we hope to convince the state there needs to be a better balance of the desires of the industry and the needs of people for drinking water," Sahli said.

Tremendous amounts of water are used in the fracking process, and advocates worry that chemicals will pollute the soil, groundwater and drinking water. The state won't ask drilling companies to disclose all the toxic chemicals used in fracking or subject them to mandatory water-pollution tests.

Last week, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced for the first time that fracking might be to blame for groundwater pollution in a town in Wyoming. The draft finding could have significant implications while Ohio and other states try to determine how to best regulate the process.

But proponents say the practice, which is not new, is safe. Gov. John Kasich has called the prospect of drilling in Utica shale a "godsend" for Ohio.

However, Sahli said that even more troubling than the construction and drilling rules is the permitting process that comes first. The application for a permit to drill is one page and lacks any questions about geology and

