

TELLURIDE
MOUNTAINFILM

Fracking 101



Directed by Scott Upshur

Fracking 101 is an animated tutorial on that buzz word you read in the news every day: fracking. The short film is the first in a series of films that make up the feature-length documentary, *Dear Governor Hickenlooper*, which played to sold-out audiences at the 2014 festival. (USA, 2014, 7 minutes)

Discussing the Film:

The following questions are intended to spark discussion and activities related to both the content and storytelling elements of this particular film.

1. What were some of the most interesting images from *Fracking 101*? What sights and sounds do you remember the most about the film?
2. Do you think the animation was effective in telling the story? Why or why not?

For more information on the filmmakers or to see other tour destinations and films, visit mountainfilm.org.

3. What did you learn about fracking? What are some negative effects fracking can have on the environment?
4. What are other ways we extract natural resources from the earth to make fuel, and how do they affect the environment?
5. What are your favorite places to go and enjoy nature near where you live? Discuss the threats to that nature and what you would do to protect it.
6. Try to make a list of all the things in your life that need oil and natural gas to run. How many of those things would you be willing to give up, if it meant your world would be a cleaner place to live? Which of those things do you think you couldn't live without?

Extensions:

1. **EXPLORE:** Visit www.deargovernorhickenlooper.com to watch the trailer for Dear Governor Hickenlooper, the feature film that includes *Fracking 101*. Check the screening schedule to see if the film is coming to a location near you.
2. **EXPLORE:** See more of filmmaker Scott Upshur's projects on the website for Starch Media at www.addstarch.com.
3. **READ:** EcoWatch's brief online review of *Dear Governor Hickenlooper*: <http://ecowatch.com/2014/05/21/dear-governor-hickenlooper-fracking-renewable-energy/>. Also, read facts on fracking on the website for the film: <http://deargovernorhickenlooper.com/fracking/>.
4. **READ:** Vanity Fair's 2010 article on the tiny town of Dimock, PA, where the landscape and water have been destroyed by uncontrolled fracking. <http://www.vanityfair.com/business/features/2010/06/fracking-in-pennsylvania-201006>
5. **DO:** Research fracking activities in your own state and seek a ban on fracking through your local town or city government. This website will help you see the change in drilling and regulations and staffing surrounding fracking in your state: <http://projects.propublica.org/gas-drilling/>. You can also get involved by contacting Colorado Governor Hickenlooper, or your own governor, about fracking.
6. **DO:** Follow fractivist Shane Davis, subject of the film *Dear Governor Hickenlooper*, as he updates us on fracking activities and protests around the US at <http://fractivist.blogspot.com/>. You can even write

to Shane with your questions about fracking and how to fight it, at fractivist@gmail.com, or on Twitter: @fractivist.

Filmmaker Conversation:

Scott Upshur, director/editor of *Fracking 101*

What was the filming process like for this short film, as part of a larger film?

Scott: We did two films, *Fracking 101* and *Project Boom*. This project is part of an omnibus. That means there are multiple smaller projects, with multiple directors, that when put together equal a feature length film. Sometimes the narrative connects and sometimes you're supposed to make your own connections between them. This one had a central narrator, Shane Davis, the fractivist, who united all the films. *Fracking 101* is pretty much the beginning of *Dear Governor Hickenlooper*. We wanted to lay the foundation of what fracking is so the rest of the films have a context. By the time we got the interviews with the doctor, which you hear, and found the illustrator, we really only had a week and a half to make *Fracking 101*.

Why did you decide to go with animation to tell this part of the story?

Scott: Well, the simplest reason is that you can create your story from a piece of paper and a pencil. That's the beauty of animation. The downside of animation is that it's really hard to do well. The illustrator had to draw all the big backgrounds you see, then myself and the other filmmakers had to come in and "animate" them or add motion to them, on a stop motion animation table that we built in my living room. This all happened after I had done the initial interview, edited all the sound clips into a 5-minute clip that we could build the movie on, and wrote a script. We had to think backwards to forwards with the pages, because each rip would expose the next layer, and we had to make sure that the top layer matched the ones beneath it.

Do you think the film is successful?

Scott: I think it is more successful than I thought it would be, especially given that we only had a week to really put it together. People seemed to enjoy it. We got a lot of feedback after *Dear Governor Hickenlooper* that people enjoyed *Fracking 101* the most out of the all the films. We got feedback from other scientists who said that, technically, there was nothing wrong with the message. That was a relief. In that complex process, with such short timelines, you worry sometimes that the message will get lost or mixed up somehow.

Why did you include the Yeti?

Scott: I don't know what a yeti actually has to do with fracking. {Laughing} We realized that, with how complex the story of fracking is, so much of what people perceive about fracking is imagined, like the yeti. People don't know what happens far beneath the ground, and that's part of the sales pitch to make you think it's all safe and there's nothing to worry about. That's factually untrue. So we identified the overarching message as "don't believe that this stuff {fracking industry representatives} are telling you is absolutely true." Everything you see is filtered through a company's message and an artist's imagination.

What piece of advice would you give to a student who wants to get into filmmaking?

Scott: I hope you like tedious tasks. Patience is enormous. You can't be afraid of hard work and doing tedious, uncomfortable things. That's your job if you want to try and communicate a message in five minutes to a room of five hundred people in a movie theatre. This film online already has a couple thousand hits. Imagine how much work it would be to go around to all those people one by one and explaining fracking. I figured this out because I've done it for fifteen years. There are a lot of ways to tell a successful story. You have to be patient in finding them.

What's your next project?

Scott: I'm working on a music video for the hip hop artist Apoc. I did his last video for a song called "Put Your Horns On Me" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QlolF9QQx4M>). The new video is for his song "Brand New Thing." We also just received a Mountainfilm Commitment Grant to extend the seven-minute *Project Boom* piece from *Dear Governor Hickenlooper* into a full forty-five minute film. If we finish the piece and they accept it, we'd like to premiere it at Mountainfilm in 2015.