Rachel Proffitt

Mrs. Bessetti-Reyes

Honors English II 6th

April 28, 2016

Fracking in National Parks

“Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that the wilderness is a necessity and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life”(“John Muir Quotes” 2). While trying to explain one’s connection with the great outdoors, John Muir, the well-known naturalist and wilderness preservation advocate, wrote these words in his book *Our National Parks*. Muir briefly mentions the abundance of natural resources and beauty that the wilderness holds, bringing life to the national parks around our country (2). However, not all come to see these national treasures but instead are there for the reaping of the natural resources within the land: fracking industries. Fracking is a way of drilling through the earth to extract the rock, oil, and gases, causing destruction and other harmful effects to the nature around it. Our nation’s national parks should be protected from fracking. The parks help preserve historical and natural aspects that would be tarnished by the fracking industry’s disturbance and damage to the land. With all of the protected wildlife in the parks, fracking causes mass amounts of destruction to their homelands. Some do not pay attention to the safety of the park land or to the unnecessary obtaining of it; they just want as much land as possible. The National Park Service works hard to protect these wonders, and fracking companies that come and destroy the land reverse everything they strive for.

National parks are threatened by vandalism created from fracking industries, tarnishing the natural beauty and numerous historical sites that our country preserves. The Funk and Wagnalls *New World Encyclopedia*’s article claims that the National Park Service possesses over four-hundred designated areas around the nation. These areas total up to more than 84 million acres of U.S. land with twenty different types of parks, including national parks, historical parks, historical sites, monuments, and memorials (1). Millions of people flock to these parks to witness the great beauty and experience the sites of historical value. However, fracking distracts and ruins the great witnessing of our nation’s past. People will stop coming to the parks because the land is damaged and covered with heavy machinery. The historical sites will be disrupted, and the landmarks could even be moved or harmed. Some places have been known to have fracking sites right outside of their park, thus causing distractions in the park. In “Fracking Our National Parks: America’s Best Idea Threatened by Oil and Gas Addiction,” Ben Jervey says, “Astronomers at Theodore Roosevelt National Park – which once offered some of the nation’s darkest, most pristine night skies – also see a new constellation of flares from nearby fracking wells,’ writes the National Parks Conservation Association” (1). Not only are the visiting people of the different parks robbed of these pure aspects of the land, but researchers and historians are also not able to perform to their best ability for their jobs. With all the polluting being done to the park, an employee could not take care of the terrain the way he or she needs to. The constant defacement and damages made during the fracking process are causing severe endangerment to the preserved land.

Wildlife living inside of the national parks are in danger from fracking due to the destruction of their habitats. The numerous species of wildlife that call these parks “home” are threatened by the clearing of land and construction of roads to prepare for the incoming heavy machinery. James D. Nations points out in his blog post, “Fracking and National Park Wildlife,” that the animals are not aware of the park boundaries and could stumble upon more machinery or face new problems outside of their protected parks. Nations goes on to write that in the western landscapes “[m]ore than 85% of the once dominant sagebrush steppe habitat, which supports a hundred bird and seventy mammal species in Wyoming alone, has been lost” (1). With the new, barren land, plant life is destroyed and the animals living there must move and risk new dangers ahead. Some of the native plant species are wiped out because their specific habitats have been destroyed by the gases and machinery. The polluted water will soak the roots and kill the plant life, while the animals drinking the water will either get sick or die. If the animals have to relocate, then they will not be safe in the new, unknown and unfamiliar territory. The fracking damages being made are affecting the innocent lives of the natural wildlife and preventing the protected lands of doing their jobs to save these creatures.

Our world depends on oil and energy for power, so large profits are being made to keep bringing in these resources. Because of this need, the industries do not seem to care about the land and wildlife they will be destroying and contaminating. Industry owners claiming land for their drilling plans and projects will say that small amounts of pollution are inevitable to gain the resources. Harmful chemicals are distributed into the air and water when the machines work to drill the resources. The pollution to the land, air, and water is spreading for miles and creating many problems for the creatures living in the areas. However, the harm is not only to the land and wildlife but also to the people in the area. In the article “Is Fracking Polluting the Air?” Doyle Rice notes that the polluted air causes at least five serious health problems such as the following: cancer, birth defects, and respiratory problems (1). The health issues spreading due to fracking are being kept secret so that the fracking companies can continue their work. Some people even feel the need to relocate to get away from the dangerous products in the air and water. All the people, animals, and plants are suffering because the unsafe treatment of the land is affecting the mass areas that fracking contaminates.

The people who argue that fracking should be performed in national parks believe that there is plenty of land that could be used. In Ben Schleeter’s article, “Not Even National Parks Are Safe From Fracking,” he explains how the oil and gas companies already own rights to thirty million acres of public U.S. land. However, this is not enough for them. They are already looking for over two hundred million more acres, all including state parks, forests, and areas around national parks (5). Since there is a lot of other public land that has already been bought and sought out by the fracking companies, these national parks should be left alone for now. The argument should be applied to a more futuristic view, when the purchased land is used up of its resources. By that point, however, there should be a better energy source created that does not harm the land. The land wanted by the fracking industry is over two times the amount of acres owned by the national parks, and a lot of the park land would not even have the resources needed for fracking. The need for land is not what the problem is at the moment, but the fracking companies believe that they should already be allowed to tear up government protected lands, destroying the beauty and many other aspects that the NPS brings. There will be a rational argument in the future about being able to drill in the parks: after the land and resources run out and the economy needs it.

Fracking companies in the United States have brought up the apparent need for land in national parks over the past few years, and it has raised some heated discussions. The natural beauty and historical connections made while in the parks should automatically show the importance of these protected parks to all who see it. The companies wanting to come in and ruin these beloved areas around the nation should be stopped. Fracking should not be allowed in any of our national parks. It defaces the historical sites and ruins the natural beauty of the land that the park service protects. The fracking coming into the parks destroys the homelands of the wildlife living in these parks and threatens them. This land is not safe from its pollution and is not needed anytime soon, despite the differencing claims that the industries make. The parks bring senses of joy and constant adventure to the millions of people who visit them each year. These amazing people bursting with excitement and curiosity should not be welcomed by heavy machinery and toxic gases. The next time a visit to the nearest national park comes along, make sure to cherish each magnificent and pure scene seen since it could be the last time its beauty is fully displayed.

Work Cited

Jervey, Ben. “Fracking Our National Parks: America’s Best Idea Threatened by Oil and Gas Addiction.” ‘DeSmogBlog.’ 27 Apr. 2013. Web. 23 Mar. 2016.

"John Muir Quotes." John Muir Quotes (Author of My First Summer in the Sierra). Web. 13 Apr. 2016.

“National Park Service.” *Funk & Wagnalls New World Encyclopedia* (2015): 1p. 1. *Funk & Wagnalls New World Encyclopedia*. Web. 23 March. 2016.

Nations, James D. “Fracking and National Park Wildlife.” National Parks Conservation Association. 28 May 2013. Web. 23 Mar. 2016.

Rice, Doyle. "Is Fracking Polluting the Air?" USA Today. Gannett, 17 Dec. 2014. Web. 27 Apr. 2016.

Schleeter, Ryan. "Not Even National Parks Are Safe From Fracking." Web. *Greenpeace*. 6 Oct. 2015. Web. 11 Apr. 2016.