



French environmentalist
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[The French National Assembly yesterday voted to ban “fracking,”](#) which extracts shale gas and oil by injecting water, chemicals, and sand into rock formations, and has received strong criticism from the environmental community. So you would think that the action, taken by a conservative government, would have pleased environmentalists.

Apparently not:

Far from claiming victory, environmentalists and opposition Socialists accused the government of yielding to industry lobbying, because last-minute amendments to the draft law will allow scientific research to be conducted on shale gas and oil and its environmental impact, albeit under the control of state entities. The government will deliver an annual report to parliament on the conditions of this research, the first due by the end of the year.

They are complaining that the government still wants to conduct scientific research? The potential dangers of fracking to the water supply are becoming clearer, but that is no reason to simply stop studying the matter. The biggest problem, [according to a Duke University report](#), is that gas leaks from shale wells into drinking water, which could create an explosion risk, and perhaps endanger potability.

I suppose that the environmental community is worried that the new studies will whitewash the problem, and give the energy industry the excuse they need to move ahead. Perhaps. But it's also possible that future technological development will improve the process to reduce environmental safety problems to an acceptable level. Burying one's head in the sand is bad environmentalism.