

Review of *Split Estates*  
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The latest wrinkle in our nation's addiction to fossil fuels is the discovery that we may be able to unlock vast reserves of natural gas by "fracking" previously impermeable formations. *Split Estates* is a valuable commentary about the impacts of this development.

In 2004, the EPA decided that fracking was not a hazard and that it need not be regulated. In 2005, Congress formally exempted fracking from regulation under the Safe Drinking Water Act. Yet, *Split Estates*, by exploring the tolls fracking appears to be taking on the environment and human health, makes a strong case that these decisions should be revisited. The film puts faces and personal stories to the dilemma, whether in home videos of flaming bubbles in a creek that provides drinking water or in the faltering steps of a once vibrant, now debilitated woman.

Some of the most valuable features of the film are its stunning graphics. Photographs do not lie, and crisp aerials vividly show the extensive footprint of the drill pads and how they pock the landscape. Infrared night images show that volatile organic carbons, invisible by daylight, are constantly escaping from the gas storage tanks into the air. Animated overlays of drilling activity on satellite images and maps make the statement that the problems of expanded drilling are compelling.

The interviews with many experts—medical, legal, and community— as well as coverage of possible legislation and the political issues, provided rich history and credibility to the film. Although the film's bias for regulating natural gas development was not hidden, to its credit, it also invited industry representatives to be interviewed and to provide their side of the story. Unfortunately, only a few took advantage of this opportunity.

In addition to the feature film, the CD contained extras that are especially helpful from my standpoint as an educator. These extras provide more information about the legal issues involved and efforts for community action. I would have liked more of this in the feature film itself, but understand the need for finding a balance for a broader audience.

Overall, *Split Estates* is a powerful tool for helping us reflect on how we will balance the true costs of developing natural gas as our nation's "bridge fuel to the future."