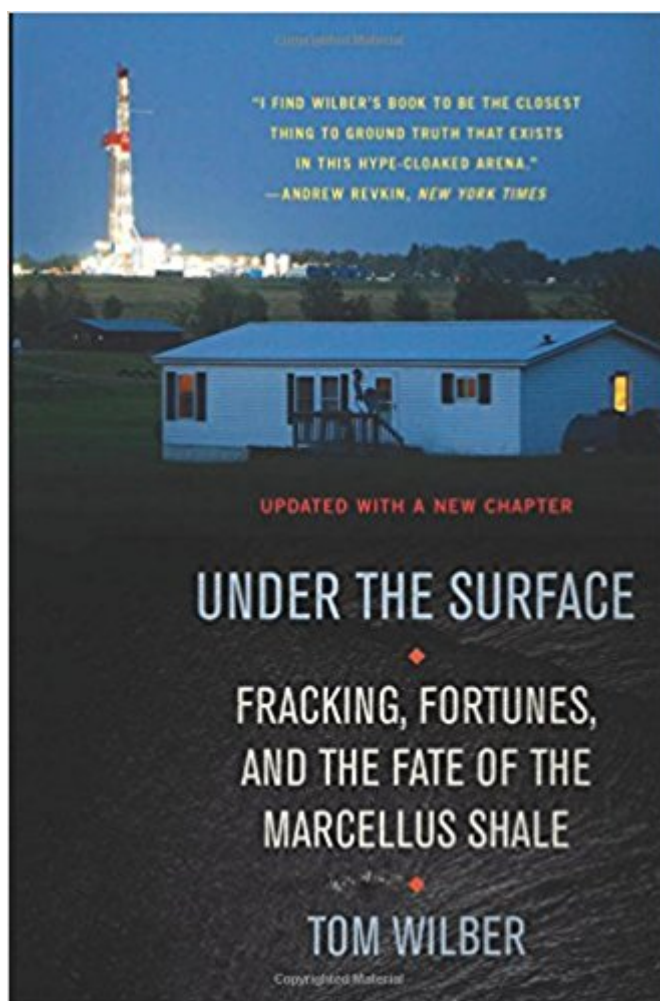


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Under The Surface: Fracking, Fortunes, And The Fate Of The Marcellus Shale



Synopsis

In *Under the Surface*, Tom Wilber weaves a narrative tracing the consequences of shale gas development in northeast Pennsylvania and central New York through the perspective of various stakeholders. Wilber's evenhanded treatment explains how the revolutionary process of fracking has changed both access to our domestic energy reserves and the lives of people living over them. For the paperback edition, Wilber has written a new chapter and epilogue covering developments since the book's initial publication in 2012. Chief among these are the home rule movement and accompanying social and legal events leading up to an unprecedented ban of fracking in New York state, and the outcome of the federal EPA's investigation of water pollution just across the state border in Dimock, Pennsylvania. The industry, with powerful political allies, effectively challenged the federal government's attempts to intervene in drilling communities in Pennsylvania, Wyoming, and Texas with water problems. But it met its match in a grassroots movement—known as "fractivism"—that sprouted from seeds sown in upstate New York community halls and grew into one of the state's most influential environmental movements since Love Canal. Wilber gives a voice to all constituencies, including farmers and landowners tempted by the prospects of wealth but wary of the consequences; policymakers struggling with divisive issues concerning free enterprise, ecology, and public health; and activists coordinating campaigns based on their respective visions of economic salvation and environmental ruin. Throughout the book, Wilber illustrates otherwise dense policy and legal issues in human terms and shows how ordinary people can affect extraordinary events.

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Customer Reviews

"Wilber has gained national acclaim for his reporting on the highly controversial topic of hydraulic fracturing." — Huffington Post "This is a faultlessly edited book, scholarly in its attention to detail and to its sources, but still manages to enthrall like a page-turning thriller. The author makes sure the facts are presented accurately and fairly, but also manages to slip in colourful details like the pattern on a lawyer's tie and a leaseholder's hairstyle. . . . It will make interesting reading for energy company executives, activists on both sides of the debate, geologists interested in the personal impact of their science, and anyone who may one day be living in the vicinity of a gas pad or thinking of signing a lease with a shale-gas company." — Geoscientist "Wilber situates his story squarely atop the Marcellus shale by recounting the experiences of residents in rural communities in order to explore how natural gas extraction impacted the people who reside above this immense geological formation. The author provides character sketches of memorable personalities who represent a range of constituencies." — Brian Frehner, Environmental History "In Under the Surface, journalist Tom Wilber details over ten years of natural gas development in New York and Pennsylvania based on extensive investigative research. While there are many publications emerging on the impacts of gas development, that is, hydraulic fracturing (fracking), Wilber's text humanizes the issue by chronicling experiences of families who are living through the full cycle of development: land speculation, intensive industrialization, and regulatory uncertainty. | Not only is this book valuable reading for Appalachian scholars and grassroots organizers, but it should be taken up by energy consumers everywhere." — Journal of Appalachian Studies (Vol. 21, No. 1)

"Under the Surface is all about energy. First, it is about this nation's insatiable appetite for it, which has led to perilous undertakings like shale extraction, with its enormous economic, environmental, political, and personal repercussions. But it is also about a reporter's seemingly limitless supply of energy. Fracking shatters subterranean rocks to release precious natural gas; Under the Surface represents a kind of reportorial fracking, in which the indefatigable Wilber bores in to extract how the process has had an impact on the lives of those atop or near that gas. While his focus is on upstate New York and Pennsylvania, this is a story that concerns us all." — David Margolick, contributing editor, Vanity Fair, and author of Elizabeth and Hazel: Two Women of Little Rock

"Under the Surface is an essential resource if you want a clear view of the bright and dark side of gas in Pennsylvania and New York. . . . Wilber's blog, Shale Gas Review, is also a vital touchstone."

"Under the Surface is an invaluable new book on the gas rush in the Pennsylvania-New York border

region. I find Wilber (and his book) to be the closest thing to ground truth that exists in the hype-cloaked arena."â

•Andrew C. Revkin, Dot Earth Blog, New York Times "Few ecological concerns are so controversial as hydraulic fracturing, or 'fracking.' . . . Across Pennsylvania, Ohio, and New York, pro- and anti-fracking forces are marshaling their constituencies for a showdown. Opponents argue that the process will ruin major water supplies, while advocates see huge resources of energy and the prospect of dazzling wealth. Wilber, a former environmental reporter who has been covering the fracking debate from the beginning, combines a storyteller's ear with a journalist's eye, offering a sensitive and especially timely take on the issue. . . . Wilber tells how the residents of New York's Southern Tier and Pennsylvania's Endless Mountains, organized, fought, and participated in countless meetings and government hearings to determine the future of their homes and land. This book will be essential background reading for the still-unfolding fracking drama."â

•Publishers Weekly (23 January 2012) "Wilber has managed to collect and organize most of the pertinent information about the geology, drilling practices, leasing of mineral rights, laws and regulations, politics, and people involved in this ongoing drama about the Marcellus Shale and its exploitation. He allows all sidesâ

•industry, government, and individuals (both winners and losers)â

•to have their say and state their case. It becomes evident that there are no true heroes and few true villains in all of this, but everyone involved has made plenty of mistakes and misjudgments. Although parts of the book read like a novel, the author carefully documents the book's content. A valuable work for anyone who has heard of fracking or of shale gas and wants to learn more. Highly recommended."â

•Choice (1 November 2012) "I think shale gas is a disaster for the planet's climate. But as this account makes clear it has also taken a profound toll on people and communities with the misfortune to sit atop the Marcellus deposits. Sometimes I think the recipe for a happy life is to make sure there's nothing valuable under your soil."â

•Bill McKibben, author of *Eaarth: Making Life on a Tough New Planet* "Under the Surface makes sure we hear from those who support development of the Marcellus Shale formation, as well as the skeptics. But it is hard not to be moved by the testimony it gathers from ordinary citizens already hurt by the methane explosions, foul groundwater, and other damage. . . . As a former regulator, it is hard for me to read how little our government agencies have doneâ

•or been able to doâ

•to make sure that our health and natural resources aren't shortchanged as this industry continues to grow."â

•Eric Schaffer, former director of EPA's Office of Civil Enforcement. "Tom Wilber covered the shale story for the Binghamton newspaper for years, and grounds it in the setting of both Pennsylvania and New York politics."â

•New York Review of Books "Wilber describes the human and geologic drama along the New York/Pennsylvania border and its effects on people, land, water, air, politics, and economies.

The narrative revolves around the area's geologic history, mineral and property rights, corporate actions, government regulations (or lack thereof), human and environmental health issues, social networks, and economic realities. The cast of advance men, scientists, cheerleaders, locals, corporate CEOs, accidental activists, politicians, and bureaucrats step off the page to meet readers. The interplay of their words and actions tells the often sad but sometimes positive story of people and politics in a world that demands ever-increasing amounts of energy. Recommended to all readers curious about the backstory of an important, ongoing public drama."âLibrary Journal "Tom Wilber's new book reads like a character-driven novel as it tells the stories of the winners and losers, industry leaders and regulators on the new frontier of shale gas. . . . Wilber doesn't push an agenda but tries to maintain a journalist's objectivity and attention to detail from all angles."âAssociated Press "If you're new to the fracking debate, and even if you have a strong working knowledge of this issue, you will come away having learned something new. Wilber provides a thoughtful, and carefully researched, look at the upsides, as well as the potentially catastrophic downsides, of the impact this new form of gas drilling could have on one of the world's most pristine watersheds."âChronogram Magazine "With a journalist's command of the facts and a novelist's eye for his subjects, Tom Wilber takes us to the living rooms, farms, meeting halls, and mountain streams where the fracking drama plays out daily. This is the grimy side of the American Dream, twenty-first century styleâthe economy vs. the environment, energy vs. water, human vs. corporation. Wilber spent more than three years researching and writing this book. His ease of storytelling, language, and explanation are a welcome guide through a complex topic. Alongside the land rush, gold rush, railroad boom, and oil boom, Under the Surface is an essential chapter in an American story that too often pits homestead and community against the building of the nation."âJohn Cronin, senior fellow at Pace and Clarkson Universities, former Hudson Riverkeeper, and coauthor of The Riverkeepers

Tom Wilber, a journalist, author, and teacher, has spent years interviewing key players and local residents on all sides of the controversial issue of developing the country's energy supplies through the controversial process of high-volume hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking." He is a reporter covering business, health and environmental issues for Gannett's Central New York Newspaper Group (including the Press & Sun-Bulletin). His reporting on fracking won Best of Gannett honors in 2010. Under the Surface was selected as a finalist for the New York Public Library's Helen Bernstein Award for Excellence in Journalism in 2013.

Well, maybe not gushing, but this was a very good book. It explains the good, the bad, and the ugly of the new "fracking" technology which makes possible the extraction of natural gas from previously unusable shale. The author has done thorough research, talking with people in the industry, in politics, and on farms who were directly affected by this new approach to "developing" our natural resources. There is a lot of information, but the author has a good narrative style, and the story pulls you along. He makes a good effort to remain objective, but it becomes clear that his sympathies lie with the landowners who have been abused by unethical oil companies. The author does make the point that many oil companies have been ethical and careful. Reading this book will give you helpful understanding of fracking generally and of the Marcellus Shale issues in particular. Since fracking is already having an enormous economic impact in America, it is worth learning about.

I'm a journalist, and I write about fracking. Wilber has been out there reporting on it far longer than I have. This is a very well-crafted book, focusing on a small group of people in upstate Pennsylvania. He is very even-handed, according a sympathetic ear not only to the victims of fracking but also to the industry representatives he interviews. At the end you see that the victims really ARE victims, not "just whiners." If you're looking for a Naomi Klein or a Christopher Hedges - or maybe even an Ellen Cantarow (that's me), Wilber isn't what you want. But if you're interested in this horrendously destructive industry, this book is a must-read.

My thanks to Author Mr. Wilber. I bought two books because I wanted our local library to have one. Everyone needs to read and understand the consequences of this issue. Mr. Wilber studied this for a long time and came up with all the information we need to form an opinion. I found it amazing that Barnes and Noble does not have this book on their shelves. Perhaps someone should contact them. Thank You

I had the opportunity to meet Tom at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. He did a talk about his experiences and his book and read a few excerpts for us. If you want to support an author - he is amazing. I loved his book and I'm happy I have it signed.

Read this and turn your thermostat down

Easy read, not as balanced a presentation as billed, but still a fair treatment overall of a difficult and controversial subject.

A well-researched description of the impact of natural gas drilling on residents in one part of Dimock PA.

Well written without a lot of bias. Tells both sides of the story

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