Fledgling Fund

Ms.

Jo Ellen

Kaiser

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**Project Name:** The Natural Gas Project

**Project Website:** T/k; organization website: [www.themediaconsortium.org](http://www.themediaconsortium.org)

**Project Summary (150 words):** The Media Consortium and Specialty Studios are seeking support for our Natural Gas Reporting Project. This collaborative transmedia project, which includes partners *Earth Island Journal*, National Radio Project, Link TV, Chelsea Green, and Care2, will shed new light on the booming gas industry in the US through in-depth, investigative reporting.

A critical component of the project will be a video news reel that will tell the stories of those impacted directly by fracking for shale gas. We will particularly highlight positive action taken by individuals and communities seeking to hold energy companies accountable to reasonable standards of behavior.

The video news reel will be distributed to Project partners as well as to all 58 news outlet members of the Media Consortium. It will also go out to community activists and the 19 million members of Care2.

**Key Issues (30 words, top 3 issues):** Many stories on fracking have not yet been told, including:

* Transpartisan resistance to fracking
* An investigation into out-of-court settlements of fracking cases
* The slipshod regulation of natural gas pipelines

**Project Goal (30 words)**: To pioneer a new type of transmedia collaboration that will educate and engage citizens to take action in the political debates over natural gas extraction.

**Social Change (150 words):** No matter who wins the 2012 election, “natural” gas will be on the top of the nation’s energy menu. Yet a range of academic studies and media reports have concluded that fracking is incompatible with protecting the environment and public health [see <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/business/energy-environment/natural-gas/index.html>] .

The frack-gas rush occurring across the United States has raised serious questions about this almost completely unregulated industry, including how much it is contributing to groundwater pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and seismic activity. Human health impacts associated with natural gas extraction are especially worrisome. In short: Are we making ourselves sick to keep the lights on?

Our project will educate the public about these risks, changing the conversation about fracking. Even more, we are already working with activists to ensure that our video will be designed to engage citizens in action via Care2 petitions, educational materials, and screenings.

**Project timeline (100 words):** This project is currently in development. A producer will work with reporters from Earth Island Journal and National Radio Project in Spring/Summer 2013. Post-production will take place in Fall/Winter 2013, with community engagement and outreach beginning in Fall 2013, continuing through release in Winter 2013, and afterward through 2014.

Note, however, that the transmedia nature of this project means that content will be released as early as Spring 2013 to accompany digital stories, and that outreach and engagement efforts will begin with other partners in Summer 2013 and be ongoing.

**Amount Requested:** $50,000

**Impact of Funds (200 words):** Fledgling Fund dollars will pay for a producer to work with reporters to create a video news reel; it will pay for pre- and post-production of that newsreel; and it will pay for the cost of creating a website to host materials produced by the Natural Gas Project so that they are accessible to activists.

This investment will be highly leveraged by the collaborative, transmedia nature of this project. Video taken as part of the news reel will accompany Earth Island Journal’s text-based investigative reports, and then will be available to all 58 Media Consortium member outlets to illustrate their pieces on fracking. Audio from the news reel will be used as the basis for at least two National Radio Project specials and will be used as part of two Link TV segments. Finally, video from the news reel will accompany Care2 petitions crafted precisely as calls to action based on the news reel content, engaging the 19 million Care2 members.

What is especially exciting is that these efforts will roll out over an extended 24 month period, thus enabling us to be ready for breaking news around fracking and to surf that wave with our content.

**Project Leadership (one sentence per person)**

Jo Ellen Green Kaiser, who serves as project manager for the Natural Gas Project, is the Executive Director of the Media Consortium.

Steve Michelson

Craig Malina

**Funding Status (other funds):**

* $15,000 in hand from a metrics project, designed to evaluate the impact of collaborative projects –Deutsch Foundation
* $5,000 requested for a media policy project, designed to chart the intersection of media policy and environmental policy—Media and Democracy Fund (proposal stage)
* $100,000 requested for the text, audio, and TV portion of the Natural Gas Reporting Project--Park Foundation (proposal stage)
* $50,000 requested for the Natural Gas Reporting Project—11th Hour (LOI stage)
* $50,000 requested for the Natural Gas Reporting Project—Heinz Foundation (LOI stage)

**Previous Funding from Fledgling?**