

## Update on "fracking":

Although I am not an expert on the "fracking" situation in Ohio, I believe that the potential for damage to the environment may be greater in Ohio than in Pennsylvania, West Virginia or New York - the other states where horizontal fracking is taking place or is anticipated. Hydraulic fracturing for natural gas is still "on hold" on New York. The Pennsylvania state government has come to the realization that the "fracking" industry needs to be better regulated. But Ohio appears to have the fewest regulations in place and a governor and legislature that are not inclined to change that situation. If Ohio follows the pattern in Pennsylvania, there will be a dramatic increase in the number of wells drilled. Production of gas in Pennsylvania in the first half of 2011 increased 60% over the second half of 2010. But the reported waste - note, this is reported waste - increased much more dramatically. Waste fluid generated increased from 5.3 million barrels in the second half of 2010 to 36.5 million barrels in the first half of 2011. The drill cuttings increased from 198,00 tons to 50 million tons in the same period. Where is this waste going? A lot of it goes out of state. Some of both the liquid and solid waste is shipped to New York (legally or surreptitiously). And Ohio is increasingly a beneficiary of the waste "fracking" fluid. In addition to the municipal waste water treatment plants, such as in Warren, Ohio, that accept - but do not actually "treat" - the highly saline, chemically-laden waste fluid, there are more and more "deep injection" wells being drilled in Ohio, where the rock formation is better suited for such wells. About 150 permits have been issued for such wells. Of course I should note that Ohio received nearly \$1,000,000 in fees this year from out-of-state drillers.

The best resource I have found for information about the fracking situation in Ohio is the organization "Network for Oil & Gas Accountability & Protection" (NEOGAP). Their website <http://www.neogap.org/neogap/> has, among other resources, a really superb 20-minute video on "fracking" in Ohio. It is better, and much more pertinent to our concerns, than "Gaslands." NEOGAP worked with members of the Ohio General Assembly to write a comprehensive reform of the Ohio Oil and Gas Drilling Law (ORC 1509). It was introduced in the Senate as SB 196 with the sponsorship of State Senator Tim Grendell (R), District 18, and in the house with sponsorship of Representative Mike Skindell (D), District 23. Unfortunately, because of powerful oil and gas lobbying, SB 196 was buried in Committee, and an industry-sponsored bill, SB 165, was adopted as a purported "reform" law. It actually made few improvements and leaves Ohioans still very exposed to the many health and safety hazards of oil and gas drilling - hazards that are exacerbated by the process of horizontal fracturing.

Although a panel of the Federal Department of Energy recently released a report concluding that hydraulic fracturing for natural gas poses risks to air and water quality, it stopped short of recommending specific state or federal regulations. The head of the panel, John Deutsch, former head of the CIA and now a professor at MIT, was paid more than \$1.4 million by Schlumberger Ltd., the world's largest oilfield services provider and Cheniere Energy Inc (a liquid natural gas firm) from 2006 to 2009 - an indication of the make-up of the panel. However, the panel did urge tighter restrictions on air emissions, disclosure of all pollutants released and chemicals used in the drilling process, and further study - a familiar phrase! - of whether natural-gas exploration contaminates drinking water.

On that point, I should note that when people such as Ohio State Senator Kris Jordan claims "over 80,000 wells have been fracked in Ohio" over the past 60 years, without problems of water contamination, two corrections must be made. At the time he made that statement - June 11 of this year - only 39 of those wells had been horizontally fracked. When challenged about such claims, the gas industry neglects to mention the hundreds - perhaps thousands - of claims of well water contamination that have been settled out of court. And when pressed further, the response is, "The problem is not the fracking process. It's leaks in the well casing."

John Elder