

16555 Heron Road
Senecaville, Ohio 43780
March 22, 2012

Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine
30 East Broad Street, Fourteenth Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Attorney General DeWine:

We are writing to you today to very urgently request your help to protect the environment and preserve our fresh water supplies, property values and quality of life in Southeast Ohio. Despite the fact that many people have been “educated” to think that high volume slick water horizontal hydraulic fracturing, injecting and the spreading of brine waste will bring jobs and income to the area, the facts remain (as we have learned from other states), that this is not the case. The lack of accountability and transparency in what has occurred disguised as “economic improvement” has actually led to neighbor against neighbor, pollution and spills and environmental degradation, and the privatization of profit and socialization of cost. So far, what has happened is that individual land owners, seduced by promises and quick money, are paying the cost in Pennsylvania. In Maryland, in contrast, there is recently established greater accountability for the gas producers to compensate for the damage they cause. With approximately 70% of Ohioans who do not want the industry to spread the “fracking frenzy” here (according to Innovation Ohio), the producers continue. Now that there is so much invested in leasing Ohio land, it has created even more incentive to “frack” (or “frac”) as much as possible as fast as possible.

It is obvious that the ODNR cannot track and oversee the amount of permitting it allows. This will spill over to additional workload to other agencies such as the Ohio EPA and ODH. With the lawsuits that are sure to come, your agency will have to defend them. All this at taxpayer expense. How do we reconcile the conflict of interest when there are public agencies, charged to protect human health and safety as well as the environment who are making money from the industry that is exploiting our resources without sound science that it is safe? The gas companies will allow the landowner to assume the cost for proving that contamination has taken place. Who has the money as an individual to fight those hugely profitable and well-funded companies who do not want to admit responsibility? And why is the oil and gas industry spending so much money to lobby politicians rather than spending it on what needs to be done to make their operations fail safe?

What we also don't understand is how can “brine” be spread on our public roads without testing it? How can toxic chemicals be injected into the ground without knowing what they are? What happens in the long run to the hydrologic cycle and increasing public water demand along with drought conditions and other considerations that don't seem to be adequately addressed?

We would wager there are people in Texas, suffering from the drought, but with a glut of gas, who wish they could suck the water back out of injection wells and make it safe to drink and irrigate with again!

Also of importance for your information, we want you to know about the tactics that “industry representatives” are using to squash citizens such as myself who are trying to communicate about the risks involved without the accountability and transparency that is needed when a fairly new method of extraction is being used without adequate monitoring and regulation. We held an informational meeting at the Guernsey County Library on March 3. It was invaded by a number of people associated with the oil and gas industry, specifically the Ohio Oil and Gas Education Association and Rhonda Reda, who attempted to stop us from speaking at our meeting. I have copied our press release about this event and have witnesses and further documentation if you would like to review it. Not only did this group try to stop our right to assemble and have free speech, they threatened us and videotaped the meeting even after we told them repeatedly it was not allowed. Since then, we have found the videotape excerpted to be used against us as a discrediting device by Energy in Depth Ohio, sponsored by the Independent Petroleum Association. I have enclosed a copy of the website in which the video of the meeting was posted. This is a violation of privacy and free speech, as well as libelous because of the lies that were printed against us.

How are individuals and local grassroots organizations supposed to be heard when faced by bullying tactics such as this funded by huge amounts of money the industry is willing to spend to stop us – even to the extent that we feel personally threatened for our safety?

With so much being injected into the ground with toxic chemicals involved that aren’t even tested and characterized before being stored, injected, spread on our roads or treated and dumped into our groundwater, it is obvious that we need better regulation with testing and cleanup costs to be borne by the industry rather than Ohio agencies and, ultimately, the taxpayer. We have learned a hard lesson from strip mining. We attended a Watershed Meeting recently, in which an employee from the ODNR talked about trying to budget and project into the future the clean-up costs, some of which must be borne into “perpetuity” by the taxpayer as a result of strip mining. Why can’t we learn from these hard lessons and project out the true cost of what we are doing to potentially degrade the environment and our fresh water supplies which will never be able to be cleaned up and safely used again?

We are also enclosing a copy of the email that we sent to the ODNR, as well as an email to the USGS requesting help. We need everyone in Ohio working together so that the problems that have been experienced in other areas do not happen here. Even more so, we need to slow down, even stop permitting the spreading of “brine” waste, drilling and injecting, until the long-term effects of all that is being done are quantified according to best-case and worst-case scenarios. So far, the evidence is pointing in the direction that says for sure that we don’t know. One thing that is projected is an increase in water usage by 40% by 2050. Will we wish we would have conserved and protected our water only after it’s too late? It seems to us that so many large gas companies are invested in leasing that they want to make sure they can profit from it before the EPA study comes out in 2014. Let’s not be pressured into allowing something now that we can seriously regret later.

Please do not leave this to individual citizens and local townships to try to sort this out and mitigate the effects. With the tough economic times in Southeast Ohio and the promises of politicians, so many people want to believe the Gas Fairy is here to restore economic health. We know this will not happen, and that there are dire economic consequences for agriculture, real estate values, tourism, recreation and other business who will suffer as a result of land, air and water pollution. If our regulatory agencies do not step forward, we will see even more deliberate intimidation and neighbor against neighbor with very little that can be accomplished in time. The state of Ohio needs to take a stand on this, just as the Attorney General in New York has done (This complaint was filed on May 31, 2011):

<http://www.ag.ny.gov/press-release/ag-schneiderman-sue-federal-government-today-failure-study-%E2%80%9Cfracking%E2%80%9D>

I appreciate Beautiful Ohio, safe drinking water out of the tap, and being able to boat and swim in Seneca Lake without fearing it will be drained down or polluted. I am working to upgrade my property and hope that property values will rise in the area instead of being degraded. But more than anything, I am concerned for the future for my granddaughter. We taught her as a young child what to do to protect her health and safety – STOP – LOOK – LISTEN! If a small child can learn this, why can't we?

Thank you so very much for your thoughtful consideration of our urgent plea for your attention to this very important matter!

Best regards,

Lea Harper
Southeast Ohio Alliance to Save Our Water
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cc: Ohio Inspector General