



Friends of the Jordan River Watershed, Inc.

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Mr. Tim Nichols, Chair
Michigan Natural Resources Commission
P.O. Box 30028
Lansing, MI 48909

9/13/12

Dear Chairperson Nichols and Honorable Members of the Commission,

My name is Dr. John Richter. I am the President of, and here to represent the grass-roots, conservation/environmental non-profit organization, Friends of the Jordan River Watershed Inc. (FOJ). I live in the Jordan Valley. The spring fed Jordan River is the largest tributary to the second most beautiful lake in the nation, Lake Charlevoix. The legendary Jordan River possesses the highest water quality of any river measured in Northern Michigan. These priceless natural resources and the quality of life of those of us who live there are threatened by the potential adverse impacts of pending deep shale, slick water hydrofracking (Fracking).

FOJ has been seriously involved in oil and gas issues for nearly twenty years. We helped lead a state wide coalition which led to the reform of Michigan's Oil and Gas Law of 1939. As a result, six new laws were enacted into law and prompted then Governor Engler, in his State of the State Address to say, "Measures must be taken to protect special places like the Jordan Valley from oil and gas drilling." At that time, Governor Engler was referring to the Antrim Gas Play, not the far more destructive current practice known as Fracking.

While preparing for this meeting I was challenged by how to condense into a three to five minute presentation the vast volumes of data, scientific analyses and personal testimonies documenting the incredibly destructive impacts of Fracking. What could I say that, by virtue of your seat on this Commission, you shouldn't already know? The evidence is overwhelming and the facts are irrefutable. One needs to spend only a short amount of time studying these issues to realize the devastating and long lasting adverse environmental impacts resulting from Fracking. Upon review, it quickly becomes apparent that our regulatory agencies and statutes, even if they were not exempted from oversight, are ill-equipped and unprepared to manage this behemoth. Fracking, as we know it today, is simply unmanageable and should be banned.

Several years ago, when T. Boone Pickens proclaimed that there were vast reserves of natural gas right here in America which could be recovered providing good jobs for American workers, I was ecstatic. At last, I thought, a clean burning fossil fuel that could serve as a bridge to renewable energy and help pull us out of this recession. Then I began to learn the real facts about Fracking. My enthusiasm quickly faded and I became alarmed. FOJ and many other groups started compiling report after report, world wide, of the devastating impacts of Fracking. Its carbon footprint is larger than coal! It became abundantly clear that the steep price of this extraction far outweighed any benefits.

About the same time the industry unveiled its highly successful advertising and public relations campaign. We then learned that the industry was carefully exempted from hard won environmental protective measures like the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Safe Drinking Water Act and others. Clearly, those in power knew beforehand how destructive Fracking is and would not be tolerated under current law. Furthermore, the industry along with our State's collaboration, vigorously leased public lands at unprecedented bargain rates before the public was aware of the consequences. These actions were and are dishonest, misleading, probably illegal and certainly unethical.

After careful and detailed analysis, we cannot think of any other extractive process with greater, more far reaching, long lasting, adverse environmental, economic, social and moral impacts for present and future generations. Fracking damages everything it touches, our air, waters, lands, people and the public trust for now and in the future. It deliberately pollutes and destroys unconscionable volumes of fresh water and has the potential to destroy the high quality tourist and agricultural economy of Northern Michigan. It does not make us energy independent and actually sets back the strides we have made toward true clean and renewable energy like wind and solar. As one Pennsylvania farmer said after leasing and developing his now polluted farm, "I can afford to move where ever I want." Sadly, most of his neighbors can't or don't want to but they are stuck with the mess.

Commissioners, this issue requires your careful consideration and when you do, there is no other conclusion you can make. Stop this pending lease sale and rescind previous leases. Ban Fracking in Michigan. Empower rather than hinder local communities to safeguard the quality of their lives. Be the responsible stewards of Michigan's Living Legacies and uphold the Public Trust Doctrine.

Governor Milliken once said, "Two thousand years ago a great philosopher said that a man who gains all the wealth of the world will not profit if in the process he loses his soul. In Michigan, our soul is not to be found in steel and concrete, or the sprawling new housing developments or strip malls. Rather it is found in the soft pedals of a trillium, the gentle whisper of a headwater stream, the vista of a Great Lake shoreline, and the wonder in children's eyes upon seeing their first bald eagle. It is that soul we must preserve."

Commissioners, you have the power and the responsibility for now and future generations to ensure this legacy does not die. Stop this lease sale and ban Fracking in Michigan.

Sincerely,

Dr. John W. Richter
President, Friends of the Jordan River Watershed Inc.