

Caring for God's Earth: Proposed Local Gas/Oil Drilling (i.e. "Fracking Light")

What's a wise course on local oil drilling? Much of Northern Michigan is 'drilled out' so gas/oil companies are exploring in our locale. We live in a densely populated area with higher potential for accidents between trucks and other drivers; in a watershed of many ponds and streams. We have inadequate state regulations (communication, regulations, distance between rigs and structures, etc.) and inadequate funding for monitoring the regulations. There are many potential health, water, contamination, earth movement, etc. risks just now being identified and studied. Some communities have found problems with increased costs /non-coverage in home insurance, problems with mortgages, reduced home values. Until we know more about the impact and risks, our high-density area should not be the state experiment for drilling impact. It's prudent to wait; any underground oil isn't going to disappear.

The proposed Michigan Senate Bill 1026 (now in committee) responded to many communities concerns about drilling in high-density areas like ours. SB1026 originally simply prohibited drilling in any city / township with 70,000+ people. In committee, it was quietly tweaked so the supervisor can easily override this prohibition. That is a giant loophole. Please email, call, or write your MI Senator asking that in the final bill wording:

1. The township (or other) supervisor will not have the right to approve the well if s/he thinks it safe and there is no other alternative.
2. The bill prohibits vertical drills in low-density areas that abut or are near high-density areas. This prevents horizontal pipes running underground into those higher-density areas.

Michigan Senator Contact Info: District 13 (includes Auburn Hills, Rochester Hills, Rochester, Oakland Twp): SenJMarleau@senate.michigan.gov; (517)373-2417.

Also, ask your city to terminate any drilling leases they signed and to create ordinances to prohibit drilling within their borders. Protect God's earth, your home value, our lifestyle in northern Oakland County: email, call, or write today about this. You'll find additional information at dontdrillthehills.org.

- Liz Loria and Susan Masiak, Justice & Peace Ministry