

## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Groups Urge Department of Natural Resources and Environment to Strengthen Oversight of Hydraulic Fracturing to Protect Michigan's Natural Resources**

*Letter from Over 30 Groups Provides Recommendations to Address "Fracking" Wells Drilled for Gas in the Collingwood and Utica Shale*

Petoskey, MICH. (November 17, 2010) – A recent discovery in Michigan revealed potential natural gas reserves very deep underground in layers called the Collingwood and Utica Shales. Because of this, more than 30 organizations sent a letter to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (MDNRE), urging them to strengthen oversight of hydraulic fracturing to ensure adequate protection of the state's valuable natural resources.

Deep horizontal drilling is used to access the potential gas reserves and requires a process called Hydraulic Fracturing, or "fracking." The process includes injecting a mixture of water, chemicals, and sand underground at very high pressures to create fractures in the rock, through which natural gas can flow for collection.

"This development is different than any other gas and oil development which has preceded it. This development has resulted in documented problems in other states including surface, ground, and drinking water contamination," the letter states. "Subsequently, more robust oversight is needed to address future development in an orderly and sustainable manner while protecting Michigan's natural resources."

The letter was sent to MDNRE Office of Geological Survey Supervisor of Wells, who is MDNRE Director Rebecca Humphries, and Assistant Supervisor of Wells, Harold Fitch. Both are responsible for the safe drilling and operation of oil and gas wells within the state.

"Our regulations have to keep pace with advances in technology," said Grenetta Thomassey, program director with Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council. She added, "The letter provides recommendations for essential actions. Michigan wants to protect public health and safety while still encouraging the wise development and use of the state's energy sources."

"Michigan must take adequate measures to ensure that the problems that have occurred in other states do not happen here," said James Clift, policy director at Michigan Environmental Council (MEC). "While Michigan has a rich history of oil and gas drilling, we also have a rich history of environmental protection. This drilling approach must be done in a manner that is proactive against unnecessary negative impacts to the environment, including contamination of drinking water sources."

Natural gas production in the United States is climbing as producers develop the deep shales in the Northeast, Texas, the Rocky Mountain states, and now in Michigan. Accessing the deep shales requires a hydraulic fracturing technique that is not only much deeper, but also includes the use of substantially more fresh water and chemicals. The letter makes recommendations to address these significant amounts of fresh water withdrawals, the chemicals used during the fracking process, financial assurances, monitoring requirements, and the use of Best Management Practices.

"Hydraulic fracking needs to be done sustainably in order to protect our water and wildlife resources," said Marc Smith, senior policy manager with National Wildlife Federation. "Michigan can be a leader for other states in providing protections against irresponsible drilling."

To read the letter, visit: <http://www.watershedcouncil.org/aquavists/aquavist-alerts/>