

Green Energy and Conservation Focus Group Concerns

Drilling for gas and oil is becoming a major environmental issue both locally and nationally. Gas wells abound in Portage County, and a proposal to run a line under West Twin Lake has just been defeated—at least temporarily—as a result of the efforts of a small group of property owners who feel that the lake is worth much more to all of us than the few paltry dollars that might be derived from royalties. Just a few miles north of Kent, the village of Bainbridge is trying to recover from a fractured gas well that contaminated their well water, destroyed property values and literally destroyed a house that blew up when the line exploded.

The problem is far more than a local one. Wyoming, Colorado and other western states are experiencing major problems as a result of a process called hydraulic fracturing, which shoots vast amounts of water, sand and chemicals several miles underground to break apart rock and release gas and oil. Fracturing is used in nine out of 10 natural gas and oil wells in the United States. Sublette County, Wyoming, is the home of one of the nation's largest natural gas fields, and many of its 6,000 wells have been drilled in this fashion. Last July, a hydrologist sampled a 300-foot water well there and pulled up a load of brown, oily water with a foul smell. Tests showed it contained benzene, a chemical believed to cause aplastic anemia and leukemia, in a concentration 1,500 times the level considered safe for people. This report is part of a longer, excellent article titled "Buried Secrets: Is Natural Gas Drilling Endangering U.S. Water Supplies?"

Gas companies are very much aware that new regulations are on the way and, as a result, have greatly increased their drilling activities nationwide in order to "get in under the wire." It is important that we remain informed and vigilant. A group called NEOGAP (Northeast Ohio Gas Accountability Project) is an excellent resource. Their local contact person is Ron Prosek, 7439 Case Ave., Mentor, OH 44060. He also can be reached at 440-974 2035 or 440-749 7117. The organization has issued a paper titled "NEOGAP's Six Steps to Public Safety," which is well worth reading. Copies may be obtained from Prosek. The organization also has an excellent DVD on the sensible regulation of oil and gas drilling.