



Southeast Ohio Alliance to Save Our Water

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The Southeast Ohio Alliance to Save Our Water, in affiliation with the FreshWater Accountability Project (www.FWAPOH.com) announced plans today to form a citizens' group to hold the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District (MWCD) accountable to property owners and taxpayers within the largest conservancy district in Ohio. This initiative, "Stop MWCD Now," will pick up from the last organized opposition in the face of the property owner tax assessment that was justified because of the MWCD's claim that it provided value-added services for public benefit. "Now that the MWCD has been shown to operate more as a for-profit agency, serving the unconventional shale gas drilling industry, putting property owners' health, water quality and home values at risk, we can again mount opposition to what we see as a self-serving agency that cares more about serving the risky, temporary, horizontal drilling industry that consumes and destroys massive amounts of valuable freshwater than for those who live within the district and pay taxes for its operation," stated Lea Harper, the group's organizer.

The MWCD, which spans parts of 18 counties and covers 20% of the Ohio land mass, is responsible for water quality, flood control and public property protections throughout the Muskingum watershed.

"Due to the great risks to the public of horizontal hydraulic fracking, there is an urgent need for public awareness and taxpayer participation in decisions being made by the MWCD," stated Lea Harper, the group's representative. "That is one of the reasons we created the FreshWater Accountability Project which is tracking public water sales activities throughout Ohio and provides the public with information from agency records and other sources to expose the massive amount of water being destroyed and profits being made from supporting the temporary shale drilling industry. Ohio continues in a drought situation in many areas, and we see the destruction of our freshwater supplies as an immediate threat to the quantity and quality of freshwater supplies for the future."

The MWCD continues to sign leases for private companies to frack next to and under MWCD reservoirs. The MWCD received over \$40 million in signing bonuses in return, not including royalty payments. Subsequently, the MWCD authorized water sales to private oil and gas companies. However, the decisions to expose the public to the high risks of fracking were made despite continuing public protest and in secret meetings with drilling companies, lawyers and consultants. The MWCD is determined to frack yet another reservoir, Seneca, despite growing citizen opposition and a

commissioned scientific report by a reknown hydrogeologist that strongly advises against fracking and urges better protection of reservoirs.

Residents in Southeast Ohio are becoming increasingly concerned about reports of water contamination and studies revealing adverse health effects because of air and water contamination from fracking. The true cost of fracking is not that well known and will not be revealed until years after the drillers are gone. Despite the Ohio drought, precious water from MWCD reservoirs will be sold for injection into gas wells, becoming contaminated with toxins and radioactivity during the process of hydraulic fracturing. It will not be usable any more for drinking water or for swimming, fishing and agricultural purposes. Some of this contaminated water will remain underground to eventually seep into remaining water supplies, some it will have to be disposed of as toxic waste, and some will be hauled to injection wells, which have been implicated in triggering earth quake activity. The huge amount of water being sold to the oil and gas companies for fracking could result in lost volume for environmental flow, storage capacity for future droughts and could even affect property values around the lakes in the future.

“The future impacts and cleanup costs could be shoved onto taxpayers through increased assessments without input or recourse. We don’t have to stand by while the MWCD plunders the very resources they were created to protect. They are accepting huge amounts of money from the oil and gas industry, without any plan on how to spend it, with no proof of future protection, development or creation of good, long-term jobs for local people,” continues Lea Harper. “That is why we have retained a financial

“Our property values will decline because of water contamination from fracking and our roads and bridges will be damaged by the heavy truck traffic, at a time when gas tax revenue is declining,” stated xxxx?? “The District is still dealing with containing damage to local waters from acid mine drainage and non-compliant sewage disposal at reservoirs. At a time when we are paying into perpetuity for the damage to our water from the contamination from strip mining and abandoned coal mines, a supposed “modern” agency is ignoring the facts of water contamination that has already happened in other areas due to fracking, looking to serve the drillers rather than the taxpayers and property owners. Where do they get their facts? Ohioans only have to look to our neighbor, Pennsylvania, to see the huge risks and costs associated with fracking. Why aren’t we asking New York State why they have yet to lift the moratorium on fracking?”

The Southeast Ohio Alliance to Save Our Water has uncovered many facts from a report they commissioned by Paul Rubin of Hydroquest. “The Rubin report appears to have been completely ignored. The MWCD has rushed headlong to lease Seneca Lake despite the fact that this noted hydrogeologist advises against this,” stated xxx. Because of this, the citizens’ group has also retained GreenFire Consulting Group to look into MWCD’s decision-making process regarding fracking leases and water sales and any fiscal responsibility irregularities and issues.

“It is not right that the MWCD can take taxes and squander public resources without public vote,” finished Ms. Harper. To get involved and to receive an invitation to the organizing meeting, contact FreshWater Accountability Project or the SOASOW on Facebook, call 888-287-6068 or email wewantcleanwater@gmail.com.

