

FreshWater Accountability Project

Dedicated to preserving
and protecting our *freshwater*,
a basic human need, belonging to us all.

wewantcleanwater@gmail.com
P.O. Box 473 • Grand Rapids • Ohio • 43522

Contact: Lea Harper
Tel.: 419.450.7042
Email: wewantcleanwater@gmail.com

For Immediate Release

CITIZENS AND PROPERTY OWNERS UNITE TO STOP MWCD BOARD DECISIONS

Attendance at Meeting Tomorrow to Raise Awareness of Risky Use of Public Resources

Citizens are rallying to show their opposition to recent decisions by the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District to lease public lands for horizontal hydraulic fracturing and sell water to support that industry. As the controversy increases because public awareness is growing in Ohio about the risks involved by engaging in this relatively new and largely unregulated drilling technique across the state, the MWCD's decision to participate full scale in this industry is being scrutinized.

A citizen's group, the Southeast Ohio Alliance to Save Our Water, continues to make public records requests to track the involvement of the MWCD in the unconventional shale drilling industry. Through the results of these requests, it has been learned that the US Army Corps of Engineers has estimated that the Pleasant Hill Reservoir could drop as much as 7.9 feet due to water withdrawals to support the large volume of water that must be taken for each hydraulic fracture. As concern grows because of the continued plans with gas drillers that are being discussed by the MWCD, citizens and property owners are becoming more and more outraged.

"Through our public records request, we have found where there are thousands of acres around reservoirs that are being requested for leasing by gas drillers, and plans are still being considered to leverage valuable freshwater resources to support the industry and to even provide profits to others, such as the City of Cadiz, at the expense of all other uses and property values in the district," states, Lea Harper, co-founder of the Southeast Ohio Alliance. "We continue to be baffled about how the MWCD has the jurisdiction or even the will to be able to leverage public resources for their profit at the expense of all others; especially property owners who continue to pay the assessment to support the MWCD's operations and unchecked expenditures. The MWCD has already made over \$30 million from leasing and approximately \$100,000 for water sales – when is there enough money for them, and why don't they value our water and quality of life as we do as local residents?"

District residents are also questioning the fact that there is little public participation allowed into MWCD decisions. At a concerned citizens' meeting on July 2, John Hoopingarner, Executive Director of the MWCD, promised to work to solicit and include greater public input into MWCD decisions. Thus far, there have been no further moves to follow-up on these promises. Mr. Hoopingarner also stated in a Board meeting that the MWCD would consider refunds on property taxes without any further action to do so. Property owners continue to be discouraged to participate because questions are not answered and complaints and apprehensions are not adequately considered. There is no direct communication available to MWCD Board members, and the Conservancy Court judges have told individuals within the district that they will not engage in discussion or return communications directly themselves about

- con't. -

matters involving the District's decisions. "This is a total corruption of the democratic process, designed to discourage individuals from having input or taking part in the decision making process. I do not see how the MWCD could be allowed to operate so secretly and autonomously throughout the years. Now that they are participating in an industry that has been proven to detrimentally impact human health and property values, and that also threatens our very valuable water supplies in Ohio and way of life, we believe the MWCD has overstepped its bounds as a conservancy and must be held accountable now for the profiteering and in the future for the detrimental impact these decisions will have," stated Lea Harper.

Citizens from the District and representatives from grassroots groups such as Buckeye Forest Council and Frack Free Ohio plan to rally in advance of the Board Meeting in Perrysville tomorrow, and letters are being written to the Board by those who cannot attend the meeting. Food and Water Watch also issued the following alert:

The dangers of fracking are clear, so why sell our water to the industry so they can frack us?

The Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District halted water sales to the fracking industry amid strong public opposition, but now they are backpedaling. The Village of Cadiz wants to buy water from the district only to turn around and sell it to the oil and gas industry. **Stand with us and ask Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District to permanently halt all water sales to oil and gas.**

The Southeast Ohio Alliance to Save Our Water has consulted with a hydrogeologist who has testified in New York regarding the dangers of hydraulic fracturing to human health and freshwater supplies. In this testimony, Mr. Paul Rubin asserts that citizens' concerns are valid: "Today's gas field technology is not capable of isolating our freshwater aquifers from gas field contaminants. For this reason, there are no hydrofracking procedures which can assure protection of our finite and valuable water resources now or in the future. As a result, toxic and carcinogenic contaminants are already and will continue to move with our groundwater flow systems to our most prolific valley bottom aquifers and rivers. The enormous magnitude of planned gas well installations (i.e., thousands) will result in large-scale and widespread water contamination that cannot be remediated." A copy of this testimony will be given to the MWCD Board members tomorrow.

Citizens within the District who would like to join forces to stop the continued leasing for horizontal hydraulic fracturing, the sale of water, or join together to monitor water and air quality as well as document decreases in property values and quality of life as a result of this activity by the MWCD are invited to join Southeast Ohio Alliance to Save Our Water on Facebook or contact Lea Harper at wewantcleanwater@gmail.com.

###

The FreshWater Accountability Project is committed to preserving clean water and to pre-empting possible environmental degradation while establishing accountability on behalf of those who may be detrimentally affected and deserve compensation if their water and quality of life are adversely affected by hydraulic fracturing activities, including injection wells and waste disposal, which also includes the spreading of "brine" (frack waste) on public roadways.

