



Viewpoint: Fracking in Kalkaska should serve as warning for southwest Michigan

MLive/Kalamazoo Gazette guest opinion By **MLive/Kalamazoo Gazette guest opinion**

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Opponents of hydraulic fracturing worry that oil and gas wells like these will cause lasting damage to the environment.

File photo | Mlive Media Group

The following is a letter to the editor that was sent to the Kalamazoo Gazette.

BY CORINNE TURNER

I just returned from a visit to Kalkaska's Westerman Well, which is the first private high-pressure horizontal hydraulic fracturing well to be permitted in this area, as similar wells are located on public lands. The leasing process here is an example of a split estate, where a person who owned the mineral rights, but not the actual land signed a lease.

The fracking began about two weeks ago. Upon arrival at a family's home (they did not sign a lease), I saw a hundred yards or so from the fracking site their well was being examined by the well man. Their well is sucking air now. A representative of the Department of Environmental Quality told them that the well has air pockets because of the high volume of heavy truck going past their stone farmhouse. There have been six water wells drilled on the fracking site.

One of the owners drew a glass of water from his kitchen faucet to show how it had turned cloudy three days prior, which would have been four days after the fracking started. I took photos of this. The cloudiness moved from the bottom to the top of the clear glass and appeared fizzy. It is difficult to determine at this point if this was methane or air in this water. Encana Corp. was sending out a lab technician to test the water the next morning.

Silica sand was blowing continually from the Halliburton sand tankers parked on the well. The neighbors adjoining this farm are situated directly next door to the operation. They stated that they had to vacate their home the day after fracking operations commenced, as silica sand was coating the inside and outside of their home. The windows remain closed. They complained vociferously, and Encana is paying to house them a 30-minute drive from their

home. They came by to tend the garden, flowers and birds and spoke about their experience.

Both sets of neighbors say the noise is horrendous, drowning out their ability to communicate outside of their home, vibrating the ground and their houses too. I personally did not experience this while observing but did note intermittent loud bursts of surging. There were huge water, chemical and waste hauling trucks moving up and down the road fairly consistently.

These folks were stoic and inspiring, in spite of everything, thanking and encouraging people like me to keep getting the word out to others to hopefully prevent what is happening to them from happening to others.

Stand by your land by joining Michigan Land Air Water Defense, which is fighting in the courts to protect public lands from fracking. Together with **www.letsbanfracking.org** they are working to get an initiative on the 2014 ballot to Ban fracking in Michigan.

Corinne Turner, of Delton, is a founding member of Michigan Land Air Water Defense as well as a petition circulator for the Let's Ban Fracking' effort. MLAWD is a grassroots non-profit organization founded nearly a year ago in answer to the Mi DNR lease auctions of mineral rights for oil & gas drilling for the entire 24,920 acres of the Barry State Game Area and Yankee Springs Recreation Area here in Barry County. They are suing the State of Michigan/DNR with the intention of nullifying these lease sales.

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