

Subject: Re: [William Harrison] potash in Crawford County?
From: "William B Harrison, III" <william.harrison_iii@wmich.edu>
Date: 5/17/2016 10:10 AM
To: ellisboal@voyager.net

Dear Mr. Boal,

The State of Michigan has a category of permitted wells called "mineral wells" that guarantee a very high level of confidentiality to the driller of that well for an extended period of time (over 10 years, I think). The term Mineral well cannot be assumed that it is specifically drilled for some type of solid mineral like Potash, Salt, etc. In fact, oil and gas are considered "minerals" under the definition of that type of well. Wildcat exploratory wells for oil and gas have often been drilled under the State "Mineral well act" so that a company can gain information about the geologic deposits in that area with out releasing the information to the public and hence their competitors. I believe that under this Mineral well act, it is not even possible for the existence of the well to be disclosed by the DEQ until the confidentiality period expires. The rules about mineral wells are that they may be kept confidential from the public, but if they are for oil and gas exploration, that well can never be produced for oil and gas. It has to be repermited as an oil and gas well and then the information is available to the public before it can ever be produced. If the mineral well drilled for oil and gas evaluation is never repermited as an oil and gas well, I would assume that the company did not find enough positive information to encourage them to continue development in that area.

I do not have any specific knowledge about the Marathon well you mentioned, but the area in Beaver Creek Township is a well-known oil and gas region with an old very large oil field there called the Beaver Creek Field. The Amherstberg formation is a known oil and gas producing zone in other parts of the state and is very likely the target zone they were evaluating.

The naming of the well "Beaver Creek D4-11" is also a very common naming style for oil and gas wells. As far as I know other mineral wells that are looking for solid minerals do not use this type of naming convention.

The Amherstberg is not a formation that contains Salt, Potash or any other type of solid minerals that could be produced commercially, so I am reasonably confident that this was an exploratory well for oil and gas that was drilled under the Mineral Well Act to maintain confidentiality. Unless the company relinquishes the confidentiality of this well I don't think any information about it will be available to the public.

In that region of the state, the depth of 4700 feet is approximately accurate for the Amherstberg formation.

If I can answer any other questions, please feel free to contact me.

Bill

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----- Original Message -----

From: ellisboal@voyager.net
To: "william harrison iii" <william.harrison_iii@wmich.edu>
Sent: Monday, May 16, 2016 7:24:48 PM
Subject: [William Harrison] potash in Crawford County?

Ellis Boal sent a message using the contact form at
<https://wmich.edu/>.

William Harrison,

I am an attorney in Charlevoix. I just started a FOIA case about a well claimed by the DEQ to be a mineral well in Crawford County, named "State Beaver Creek D4-11". For a variety of reasons the well gives the appearance of being an oil-gas exploratory well not a mineral well. The operator, Marathon Oil, used a drill rig last fall which saw service in oil-gas exploration immediately before and after D4-11. A worker there told me at the time the company was looking for gas and oil, a blowout preventer was left in place after the rig departed the several-acre site in the state forest clearing and since then there has been no activity. The rig went 4700 feet into the Amberstberg formation, at the same level at which Marathon was exploring for oil and gas a half-mile away. A DEQ inventory brochure says there are no minerals in Crawford County. Marathon Oil to my understanding is in the oil-gas business, not potash business. The rig was brought 1000 miles from oil-gas sites in North Dakota and must have cost Marathon millions to transport and operate.

A 43-second video of the drilling operation from last fall is viewable at at
https://youtu.be/XWn_0DroCKQ .

I saw an article of last year by Dan Calabrese featuring a discussion with you of potential potash production centered around a plant in Hersey near Big Rapids. Apparently there is a large deposit of potash underlying much of the lower peninsula, although I am not clear as to what the formation is in which the deposit is thought to be.

The purpose of the case, on behalf of a neighbor and an environmental organization, is simply to obtain DEQ documents about the well. DEQ is refusing any information on a claim that the well is a mineral well, under the law of which there are special confidentiality provisions which do not apply to oil-gas wells. The minerals which DEQ typically regulates under this law, to my understanding, are potash, salt, and brine.

DEQ will not even say if it did permit the well.

Salt and brine are abundant in Michigan so it is not likely that D4-11 was drilled for them. That leaves potash as the potential sought-after ore. Puzzling, because Crawford County does not show up in the map accompanying the above article.

If it turns out the well is a legitimate exploratory well for a Michigan mineral I will drop the case. But so far DEQ will tell us nothing, even though the unusual law on this point is that the burden of proof is on it.

I will send documents and pictures on request. Would you be willing to view the 43-second video and then call or write me to discuss the above.

Perhaps you will immediately see clues in the video which tell you the purpose of this well.

Thank you.

Ellis Boal, phone 231-547-2626