

May 28, 2013

Illinois General Assembly
Illinois State Capitol
Springfield, IL

Dear Members of the Illinois General Assembly,

With great alarm, we, the undersigned – your neighbors in Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota – are watching as the Illinois General Assembly considers a regulatory bill that would serve to open your state up to large-scale, high volume hydraulic fracturing, or fracking.

Although we do not live atop oil- or gas-containing shale, we do live in communities situated atop vast deposits of silica sand, which are a necessary ingredient in the fracking process. (Prized for its unsurpassed strength, silica sand is used to prop open the cracks so created when high volumes of high-pressure water and chemicals fracture the shale. With the cracks held open by grains of sand, the gas can flow out.) Silica sand is the agent of fracking, and it is a limiting agent. The gas and oil industry go to great lengths to obtain sufficient quantities. The sand rush that accompanies the gas rush is, in our experience, a direct menace to our communities. www.ccc-wis.com

We are suffering greatly from the industrial strip-mining and processing of silica sand that has been the direct consequence of the ongoing shale gas boom in this nation. Our communities, our land, and our health are in the process of being literally destroyed by it. **We beg you to declare a moratorium on fracking in Illinois, as we are sure that, should you move forward with this regulatory bill and open your state to large-scale fracking, the demand for frac sand will increase further, along with the price – and thus along with the pressure on our own political leaders to escalate further the devastating practice of frac sand mining and processing.**

While sand and gravel mining have long been part of our local economies, we have never before witnessed the removal of vast quantities of this specialized silica or quartz sand at this scale, scope, and intensity. The demand for frac sand is literally changing the contours of our surroundings. The hills, ridges, and bluffs themselves are or will be vanishing as over 120 mines are opened or in various stages of permit currently.

With this letter, we also bring direct knowledge to the people and legislators of Illinois about sand mining, which will almost certainly take place along your own rivers and bluffs should you create a permissive environment for the oil and gas

industry. Your regulations for fracking do not extend to the attendant process of frac sand mining with which there are associated many dangers.

First, industrial strip mining for frac sand threatens our ground- and surface water supplies. Strip mining for frac sand turns rural areas into vast moonscapes. Erosion caused by physical disturbance of the land itself as well as the migration of pollutants from the chemical processing of the sand threaten to pollute our aquifers. Also, high-capacity wells used by the mining operations and during processing threaten to deplete ground and surface water that we need for drinking, farming, and recreation.

Second, frac sand mining is damaging the quality of our air. Fleets of diesel trucks run constantly on rural roads, as a single mine and processing plant is serviced by hundreds of truck trips per day. Even worse is silica dust, which is both a proven lung carcinogen and a cause of the disabling and often fatal disease, silicosis. Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources admits that airborne silica is a carcinogen but does not require monitoring for it in our communities. They have not established a standard that would protect human health. Silica dust from freshly fractured sand formations is more toxic than silica found in naturally weathered soil.

Third, massive sand mining operations are jeopardizing wildlife habitat and natural resources. Clear-cutting, open-pit mining, and hilltop removal are all part of frac sand mining. As hills and bluffs are loaded into trucks and hauled away, our landscape is disappearing, and the water cycle itself is being altered. Of course, our hills and the sand deposits of which they are made are not replaceable.

Fourth, the dramatic increase in heavy truck and rail traffic make safety and traffic congestion a huge problem. Also, the heavy hauling causes road damage, interferes with tourism and recreation, and generates costs for local taxpayers. The unrelenting noise of blasting, traffic, rail cars, dangerous intersections at rail sites, and vibrations are also health threats.

Fifth, our property values are sinking. All the mines, haul routes, processing plants, and rail spurs can reduce property values by 30 percent. Meanwhile, this industry provides us few local jobs, even as it destroys farmland.

As your neighbors, we stand together with citizens in your great state of Illinois who also do not want an economy dependent on the boom and bust cycle of extractive mining and drilling. The jobs provided by both frac sand mining and horizontal fracking are temporary and toxic. We invite you to visit our altered communities and tour our sand mines, processing plants and trans-load stations. Let us show you the open trucks, rail cars and barges, with silica dust flying off them into our

neighborhoods. We will gladly share information with you. We beg you, however, to declare a moratorium on hydraulic fracking until you do.

Sincerely,

Patricia J. Popple Chippewa Falls, WI www.ccc-wis.com

Jim Gurley, Winona, MN Winona Area Citizens Concerned About Silica Mining (CASM)

Steve Schild, Winona, Minnesota, member of CASM (Citizens Concerned about Sand Mining. I have seen the damage done to previously beautiful rural areas in western Wisconsin, and I'd hate to see similar damage occur elsewhere.)

Greg Gaut, Winona, MN, Winona Area Citizens Concerned About Silica Mining (CASM)

Doug Nopar, Winona, MN, Winona Area Citizens Concerned About Silica Mining (CASM)

Nettie Rosenow, Buffalo County, WI

Andrew Werthman, Eau Claire County, WI

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Blake Bichanich, Eau Claire County, WI

Lois Linse, Eau Claire County, WI

Carol Gehl, Chippewa County, WI

Henry Boschen, Chippewa County, WI

Jeanne Nutter, Trempealeau County, WI

Jody McIlrath, Frontenac MN 55026

Eric Nelson, Winona MN, Citizens Concerned about Silica Sand Mining (CASM. I support a moratorium on frac sand mining in Illinois, and, if mining proceeds, restrictions on mines 1/2 mile of streams and springs.)

Kimberlee Wright, Midwest Environmental Advocates, Madison, WI

Dwayne Mettner, Chippewa County, WI

Katie Mettner, Chippewa County, WI

Kelley Stanage, Houston County, MN

Charles Avila, Houston County, MN

Linda Mossman, Whitehall, WI Save Our Town Whitehall

Rebecca Pierce, WI

Cheryl L. Miller, Dunn County, WI, Save the Hills Alliance, Inc.

Donna Buckbee, Houston County Protectors, Houston County, MN

Joan Schnabel, Fountain City, WI Buffalo County Defenders

Jeff Falk, Fountain City, WI, Buffalo County Defenders

Irene Pruzek, Chippewa County, WI

Irv Balto, WI

Lisa Herrmann, Eau Claire, WI

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Mary Lee Hegnauer, Trempealeau County, WI

Peggy McAloon, Dunn County, WI

Mike McAloon, Dunn County, WI

Sarah Joy Wexler-Mann, Houston, MN - Houston County Protectors (HCP)

Daniel Drazkowski, Houston, MN - Houston County Protectors (HCP)

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Helen Kees, Eau Claire County, WI

Robert Kees, Eau Claire County, WI

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Diane Simpson, Eau Claire County, WI

Paul Simpson, Eau Claire County, WI

Kate Simpson, Eau Claire County, WI

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Rose Gurley, Winona Area Citizens Concerned About Silica Mining (CASM) and Land Stewardship of Minnesota.

Jacque Daniel, Chippewa County, WI

Dr. Jim Brown, Monroe County, WI

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Tom and Kathleen Bibus, Red Wing, MN

Jan Zmuda Charles, Fall Creek, WI

Donna Brogan, MN

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Daniel Gruber, Eau Claire County, WI

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