

WATER SUPPLIES IN BERNALILLO COUNTY ARE THREATENED WITH OIL DRILLING

- **Oil and gas drilling may contaminate pristine drinking water aquifers in Bernalillo County.**

Oil and gas companies frequently use a technique, hydraulic fracturing or “fracking,” to increase a well’s production of oil and gas. Fracturing fluids, which often contain toxic chemicals, are injected underground into wells at high pressures to crack open an underground formation and allow oil and/or gas to flow more freely. More than 90 percent of oil and gas wells in the United States undergo fracturing. While a portion of the injected fluids are transferred to aboveground disposal pits, some of the chemicals may remain underground.¹

- **Drilling has polluted drinking water in New Mexico, Alabama, Colorado, Virginia, West Virginia and Wyoming.**

Residents have reported changes in water quality or quantity following fracturing operations of gas wells. Here is one homeowner’s account:

Laura Amos, her husband Larry and daughter Lauren live south of Silt in western Colorado. "We were among the first in our area to have natural gas drilling on our property. In May 2001 while fracturing four wells on our neighbors' property (less than 1000 feet from our house) the gas well operator "blew up" our water well. Fracturing opened a connection between our water well and the gas well, sending the cap of our water well flying and blowing our water into the air like a geyser at Yellowstone. Immediately our water turned gray, had a horrible smell, and bubbled like 7-Up..."²

- **Oil and gas drilling wastes water**

Oil and gas drilling in the arid west wastes billions of gallons of water and may have potentially devastating economic and environmental impacts for affected communities in the long-term. Discharging ground water can deplete freshwater aquifers, lower the water table, and dry up the drinking water wells of homeowners and agriculture users. The water discharged from oil and gas wells is highly saline. This water can permanently change chemical composition of soils, reducing soil, air and water permeability and thereby decreasing native plant and irrigated crop productivity.³

- **The oil and gas industry has exemptions from two major laws established to protect the nation’s water—the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act.**

The Clean Water Act is our bedrock law that protects American rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, and other waterways from pollution. These surface waters are often sources of drinking water for people and livestock. The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) was enacted to protect public drinking water supplies as well as their sources. This Act authorizes health-based standards for drinking water to protect against both naturally occurring and man-made contaminants.

¹ <http://www.nrdc.org/land/use/down/contents.asp>

² <http://www.earthworksaction.org/cvLauraAmos.cfm>

³ <http://www.wilderness.org/Library/Documents/upload/Too-Wild-to-Drill-Overview.pdf>

The Safe Drinking Water Act's Underground Injection Control program protects current and future underground sources of drinking water by regulating the injection of industrial, municipal, and other fluids into groundwater, including the siting, construction, operation, maintenance, monitoring, testing, and closing of underground injection sites. Unfortunately, the oil and gas industry is exempt from crucial provisions of the Safe Drinking Water Act intended to protect our drinking water.

- **The New Mexico Oil Conservation Division has detected and documented more than 700 incidents of groundwater contamination from oil and gas facilities across the state.**

Prior to 1990, only 39 orders were issued against oil and gas companies for contaminating groundwater; since 1990, 705 documented groundwater incidents related to the oil and gas industry have been recorded in New Mexico.

For More Information:

www.OGAP.org

www.nrdc.org/land/use/down/contents.asp