**Injection Wells in Washington County – Talking Points**

-Class II injection wells, as they are categorized by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Oil & Gas Resources Management, are deep-ground penetrations that push waste from hydraulic fracturing (fracking) into the ground. This division of ODNR is tasked with reviewing requests for permits and for conducting regular inspections of these wells.

**-** In 2019 Washington County had the second-highest level of injection well activity in the state at 8.1 million barrels of brine waste, 68% of which was from out-of-state (PA & WV) sources. Our county has the highest number of wells in the state. In 2011 there were 1.9 million barrels of brine waste injected in our county. Washington County is one of 22 counties in the officially designated Appalachian region, where the vast majority of injection wells are located. This leads to an important question: If there are deleterious effects of injection wells in this region, wouldn’t this constitute a disproportionate impact and involve an issue of environmental justice?

- This fracking waste is referred to as “brine,” but much of it is radioactive and is composed of water and additional chemicals, such as lead, arsenic, formaldehyde, mercury. Although only one percent of brine contains these chemicals, when we are dealing with a million gallons of water per well, this is not about teaspoons full. The shocking fact about this fracking waste is that, due to congressional action, referred to as the Halliburton rule, oil and gas companies are not required to reveal the contents of fracking waste.

-I am aware that injection wells have cement casings and annulus controls and that they are customarily drilled to a depth of approximately 3,000 feet while aquifers, from which drinking water is obtained normally are drilled at 200-300 feet. This means that, if properly done, injection wells should not pose any risk to aquifers or surface water. The keyword in this conclusion is “properly.” Spills. leaks, discharges, excessive amounts of brine, and other potentially harmful events are not uncommon at injection well sites, especially given the vast proliferation of injection wells in Washington County and throughout eastern Ohio.

- In a September 5, 2020 article in the Columbus Dispatch, there was a report on the Redbird #4 spill indicating that fracking waste had seeped into natural gas production wells but not into drinking water. But an article in Consumer Reports (December 3, 2020) stated: “The risk to drinking water comes in two major ways. First, water used in the hydraulic drilling process can leak into aquifers and other groundwater supplies. Second, the wastewater that fracking produces can contaminate supplies when waste leaks from landfills that accept oil, when waste spills from trucks or pipelines moving it, when equipment fails, or when waste leaks from unlined disposal pits.” In addition, there was a spill of “brine waste” just outside Marietta in January 2021 at a pipeline owned by Deep Rock Disposal. There was very little transparency about this spill. And in August 2021 there was a spill of raw petroleum in Veto Lake in western Washington County. The cause of the Veto Lake spill has still not been determined, but many in the area believe that the constant injection of brine waste (under pressure) is what caused this spill.

-Some oil and gas producers in Washington County have noticed that many of their production wells have been harmed or destroyed by brine waste and are taking action to express their concerns on this matter. They can speak for themselves.

- This year the Ohio legislature passed two bills (House Bill 282 and Senate Bill 171) which amounted to a giveaway to the brine-waste disposal business and a sell-out to the health of Ohioans. These bills allow for 333 times the radioactive level recommended by health experts. Even the ODNR has stated that this does not ensure the protection of public health.

- As a concerned resident of Washington County, it is my observation that ODNR does not have the human or physical resources to conduct a complete regimen of inspection (which they are supposed to do every 11-13 weeks), follow-up and enforcement required of these facilities which pose environmental and health risks to the county and indeed to the entire state. Until ODNR answers the numerous questions about injection wells, which have been posed to them, it is my recommendation that all activity at injection wells be halted—or at the very least no additional permits for Class II injection wells be approved.