

DRAFT

Chatham County

Resolution on Hydraulic Fracturing in North Carolina

WHEREAS, hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking,” is a method of extracting natural gas that involves injecting, at an extremely high pressure, an undisclosed mixture of water, sand, and toxic chemicals to break up shale or other rock formations otherwise impermeable to the flow of gas;

Whereas, North Carolina does not currently allow either horizontal drilling or injection of chemicals underground, and the current North Carolina draft report of in-state shale gas resources and of the potential impacts of reversing this ban and allowing drilling and fracking to extract these resources raises serious questions and need for additional information which requires adequate funding and additional time;

WHEREAS, the Deep River/Triassic Basin, which includes areas within Chatham County has been identified as containing underground deposits of natural gas;

WHEREAS, millions of gallons of fresh water are used to drill and frack each shale gas well, and such development could exacerbate local water shortages such as those that have stemmed from North Carolina’s recent severe droughts;

WHEREAS, the resulting wastewater contains not only the unknown chemicals used in fracking fluid but also harmful levels of natural contaminants from deep underground, including corrosive salts, metals, volatile organic compounds, and radioactive elements known to pose serious public health threats;

Whereas, there are no safe, commercially viable options for the disposal of this toxic fracking wastewater, and the four methods of disposal identified in the draft DENR report, all have serious environmental, economic and safety problems associated with their use,

WHEREAS, negative environmental and public health impacts from fracking is well documented in other states, including the contamination of drinking water wells, the contamination of surface waters, and the degradation of air quality;

WHEREAS, many residents of Chatham County, including a large land area in the Triassic Basin being considered for development, rely on private drinking water wells from groundwater and fracking would pose short- and long-term risks to this groundwater;

Whereas, the current and future water supply for much of Chatham County is Jordan Lake, and surface spills from drilling sites, and fracking wastes in the watersheds of tributaries to this lake would put at risk this vital water supply;

WHEREAS, the 2005 federal Energy Act exempted the regulation of the underground injection of fracking fluid under the Safe Drinking Water Act (the “Halliburton Loophole”) as well as exemptions from other federal environmental protections such as the Clean Water Act and , and potentially radioactive drilling waste and fracking wastewater are exempted from regulation as hazardous waste, or hazardous material, under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act;

WHEREAS, drilling companies are pursuing leases from farmers and other landowners in the Deep River basin for mineral rights, and including in these leases unfavorable terms such as requirements that landowners supply the water and host storage ponds for the toxic chemical wastes and be responsible for mitigating environmental damage, noise, and light pollution; and that certain developers have been selling residential lots in Chatham County with their mineral rights retained by the developer;

WHEREAS, fracking industrializes rural areas with drilling rigs, new roads, containment ponds, new pipelines, and other infrastructure, with incumbent air, water, and noise pollution that can be detrimental to health, property values and future economic growth; and can be expected to be detrimental to tourism, recreation, and future economic growth in Chatham County;

Whereas, drilling and fracking for shale gas would bring a significant increase in heavy-duty truck traffic, causing traffic congestion and accelerated road damage in Chatham County;

WHEREAS, the residents of Chatham County can expect that most of the jobs associated with developing natural gas in the Deep River basin will be filled by out of state drilling operators and temporary workers who already have experience in the industry;

WHEREAS, the long-term economic impact of following the boom and bust cycle of an extractive industry such as shale gas development is typically negative given the attendant legacy of decreased economic diversity, increased income disparity and environmental pollution;

WHEREAS, the area identified to have natural gas deposits is in the vicinity of the Shearon Harris Nuclear facility and adjacent Jonesboro Fault, and increased seismic activity could result from the operations of high volume shale fracturing for gas or deep underground injection of fracking wastewater;

WHEREAS, the draft report is weak regarding analysis of the financial impacts to local government, thus it is unclear as to the cost to the taxpayer;

WHEREAS, because of the over-supply of natural gas in the United States, the price of natural gas is at a ten year low, thus there is no need to fast-track changes in the North Carolina general statutes;

Now Therefore Be It Resolved, that we, the Chatham County Board of Commissioners, urge the North Carolina General Assembly to maintain current laws in North Carolina that prevent hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling in the State and to take no action that would weaken these laws before it is fully demonstrated that North Carolina public health, waters, land, air, economy, and quality of life can be fully protected.

Further let it be Resolved, we urge no action until the full financial impact to the taxpayers in North Carolina and in Chatham County is understood so that we can ensure that the taxpayers are not burdened with the impacts of allowing shale development in Chatham County and in North Carolina. And that the state preserve local governments' abilities to determine appropriate land use planning and zoning related to potential locations of oil and gas activities, and that sufficient public input opportunities be provided for any policy and rule making processes.