

Resolution No.: 17-1018
Introduced: February 25, 2014
Adopted: March 4, 2014

**COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

By: Councilmember Riemer

SUBJECT: Resolution to oppose “fracking” in the George Washington National Forest until the effects on water supply are better known

Background

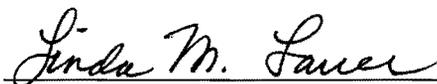
1. The George Washington National Forest contains over 1.06 million acres of public land and is located in Northern Virginia and Southern West Virginia. In addition to being home to over 40 species of trees, 2,000 species of vegetation, 200 species of birds, 55 species of mammals, and 1,000 miles of trout waters, there may be natural gas buried underneath the Marcellus Shale.
2. Advances in drilling technology, namely hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling (collectively referred to as “fracking”), have made it possible to profitably extract the natural gas from the Marcellus Shale. Specifically, fracking involves drilling a deep well and then pumping water, sand and chemicals to fracture the shale, which releases the natural gas for extraction.
3. Proposals from the gas industry to frack in this forest are awaiting a decision by the U.S Forest Service, the federal agency who administers the land.
4. Importantly, this national forest is also located within the Potomac River Basin. The Potomac River is the sole source of drinking water for the Washington D.C Metro Region’s nearly four million residents.
5. Opponents of fracking contend that the drilling method can contaminate water at its source primarily through chemicals used in the process. The industry asserts that their practices are safe and that gas is cleaner than coal.
7. The Environmental Protection Agency is currently undergoing a review of fracking and its effects on water supplies. The final report, likely completed in 2016 or 2017, will be the most comprehensive and authoritative on the subject.
8. The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, the D.C. Water and Sewer Authority and the Fairfax Water Authority all oppose fracking in the forest until the dangers on water supply are better known.

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland, approves the following resolution:

The County Council opposes any hydraulic fracturing or horizontal drilling in the George Washington National Forest until such time that a comprehensive and rigorous environmental study determines that such drilling will not have an adverse impact on the regional drinking water supply.

This is a correct copy of Council action.

Handwritten signature of Linda M. Lauer in cursive script.

Linda M. Lauer, Clerk of the Council