

Wheatland County

Resolution Natural Resource Exploration

Endorsed By

WHEREAS the Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB) is an independent, quasi-judicial agency of the Government of Alberta that regulates the safe, responsible, and efficient development of Alberta's energy resources: oil, natural gas, oil sands, coal, and pipelines.

WHEREAS in 2008, the ERCB launched the **Provincial Groundwater Inventory Program**, to map and inventory groundwater resources in Alberta. To date, minimal mapping in the rural areas of Alberta has been completed.

WHEREAS current Alberta regulations require that natural resource development provide an extensive barrier, both vertically and laterally, between any shallow stimulation interval and existing water wells, in addition to isolating the aquifer and the fractured zone, and industry must self report to the ERCB Environment Group if non-saline groundwater is encountered below 600 metres.

WHEREAS there is a growing scale of concern on natural resource exploration processes, specifically hydraulic fracturing, and their impacts on drinking water, changes in land formations and seismic activity pertaining to parts of the fracturing practices.

WHEREAS fourteen (14) countries, three (3) Canadian provinces, eleven (11) states have taken action on "Fracking Practices" either by posing conditions, moratoriums or outright bans.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties request the Province of Alberta to

1. Take all necessary steps to ensure natural resource exploration does not pose a threat to our environment.
2. Require industry report, prior to the commencement of natural resource exploration, an evaluation of the geologic conditions and pre and post monitoring for seismic activity.
3. Require the mapping of all aquifers prior to any natural resource exploration.
4. Protect surface and groundwater supply by imposing a minimum well borne casing depth below aquifer zones.

Member Background

The Province of Alberta comprises of a vast variety of geological formations. Over the past number of years, the oil and gas industry has increased its natural resource exploration. Specifically there has been a significant increase in the coal bed methane (CBM) operations and hydraulic fracturing (fracking). The fracturing of deep rock formations with water, sand and chemicals is a non-linear process that can open fractures to freshwater formations as well as other oil and gas wells. Also in the absence of public reporting on fracking chemicals, industry water withdrawals and full mapping of the province's aquifers, rapid shale gas development could potentially threaten important water resources. An example, is the Horn River Basin in British Columbia that has a distinctive geology and hydraulic fracturing that has caused rare and minor seismic activity.

Subsequent to natural resource exploration and activities, concerns have been received from landowners reporting a decline in their water levels and contamination of their water wells including and not limited to sulphur gases. Other residents have reported changes in land formations, opening of natural springs and sink holes. While there is no proven link between these incidences and natural resource exploration, some residents are of the opinion "fracking" activities have initiated these occurrences. We need to ensure the protection of our environment and our water – our most valuable natural resource.