

July 14, 2014

Calvin Clark, Road and Bridge Superintendent  
Stillwater County  
PO Box 715  
Columbus, MT 59019

Dear Superintendent Clark:

I've been thinking about you lately because I know that there are lots of demands placed on your position with the county. Although there is a little time left yet, the drilling of fracture wells is coming to Stillwater County as you know. I believe that would make Stillwater an unfortunate test county for this part of the state. The operative question is not "if?", but "when?" Other appropriate questions might be "how can it be done?, and how should it be done?" as opposed to "how do the companies intend to do the work?"

I sincerely hope that Stillwater County and Carbon County officials and all constituents are educated and prepared well in advance so they can deal with the oil/gas companies fairly and appropriately. Whether they know it yet or not, all potentially affected property owners in Stillwater County will need to learn how to sufficiently protect their natural resources, property rights and property values.

Wherever fracking has already occurred across the United States, there are tax revenues, supplemental personal income, and temporary jobs for sure. That's the good part, potentially. It's my understanding, however, that the dollar signs can and often do lose their luster when the drilling starts. Not always mostly bad news, but too often the tangible and intangible losses exceed the monetary enticements.

As you well know, roads can and do take a beating from extensive well drilling activity. Existing pavement can be turned into gravel, and existing gravel can be turned into sand and dust because of the heavy industrial traffic. The big trucks hauling fresh water to a well for frack drilling often do the most damage because of their sheer weight and numbers.

For example, many individual wells in other parts of the country have required 2 million or more gallons of fresh water to drill them (water rights issues?!). Assuming a 5-axle tanker truck hauls about 8,500 gallons and a multi-axle pup trailer takes another 3,000 gallons, these trucks when fully loaded would weigh around 50 tons. And, it would take approximately 174 loads (2 million/11,500) of fresh water with these big trucks—for a single well. Of course, there would be lots of other truck traffic to and from any given well. This could very possibly require several hundred more trips per well with smaller trucks. When the drilling company begins its stated goal to “bring the Bakken to the Beartooth Front,” they’ve said they envision 50 frack wells—each, of course, with their own water and road demands.

I know you are very aware of all the other potential problems (dust, health, noise, inconvenience, safety, traveler complaints, and maintenance/reconstruction cost) that can occur if all these well-related trucks are allowed to run without appropriate constraint. I sure wouldn’t want Stillwater Co. taxpayers left holding the bag to pay for all the road/bridge infrastructure damage and for all other issues related to such truck traffic.

I am writing this as food for thought for you while there is still a little time to prepare, i.e. before BLM permits the well(s) for the pad that has been constructed near the town of Dean.

Respectfully,

/s/ Dennis R. Hoyem  
Dennis R. Hoyem

cc: Stillwater County Commissioners