



Coalbed Methane Association of Alabama
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October 23, 2003

The Honorable Jeff Sessions
United States Senate
493 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0104

Senator Sessions:

The purpose of this letter is to ask that you urge the members of the Conference Committee on H.B. 6 to keep the current language related to hydraulic fracturing in the final Conference Report. I have just read an alarming letter from 15 members of the House and Senate to the House and Senate Chairmen of the Conference Committee on the Energy Policy Act requesting the hydraulic fracturing provision be removed.

The letter incorrectly links some isolated water well issues in Alabama to hydraulic fracturing by stating;

"Residents in Alabama, Colorado, and New Mexico have reported problems with oily water coming from their faucets and methane-contaminated wells."

I would like to take this opportunity to provide you with a clearer understanding of what is and what is not at play.

Water wells in the area between Tuscaloosa and Birmingham have had chronic problems with dark slime deposits that could be mistaken for oil or gel. In reality, these wells are plagued with a common iron bacteria infection. This issue is so widespread that in 1975 the Geological Survey of Alabama released circular 96 on how private wells could be treated for this infection. This was 5 years before commercial coalbed production began in Alabama.

In addition, the shallow water wells in the area of coalbed methane activity in Alabama are most often drilled into, or near, coal seams themselves. Private well owners, who pump the water from these formations, are liberating the methane gas from the coal just like a legally permitted coalbed methane wells does. Methane production from shallow private water wells has been documented for decades before the first coalbed methane well was ever drilled, much less hydraulically fractured.

Diesel fuel is not used for hydraulic fracturing of coal seams in Alabama. About 98 percent of our fracturing fluid is fresh water. This was the case even before the EPA mandated the unnecessary hydraulic fracturing regulations.

The hydraulic fracturing language contained in the Conference Committee Report on H.R. 6 is vital to the continued success of the 900 men and women working in our industry. We hope to add to the more than \$2.5 billion already invested by coalbed methane operators in our state. Clarifying the hydraulic fracturing situation with this language will help make that future investment possible.

Thank You,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis Lathem", written over a white background.

Dennis Lathem
Executive Director

CDL/gc