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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Liz Kirkwood, Executive Director
liz@flowforwater.org or 231-944-1568

ADVANCING PUBLIC TRUST
SOLUTIONS TO SAVE THE
GREAT LAKES

FLOW Local Ordinance Program Addresses Fracking Impacts in Conway Township, MI

Over 100 Citizens Attend FLOW Presentation

FOWLerville, MI – In February of 2014, Conway Township signed up as the third township to participate in FLOW’s Local Ordinance program that helps the township develop regulatory ordinances to address potential risks and impacts of high volume hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) for oil and gas. On February 6th, FLOW Executive Director Liz Kirkwood and FLOW Founder Jim Olson delivered the first of two public presentations to educate and empower Conway Township leaders and residents about the associated risks and impacts of fracking and specific legal strategies to consider.

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Held at the Alverson Center for Performing Arts in Fowlerville, the presentation drew an estimated crowd of almost 150 citizens and leaders who came to learn about horizontal fracking developments in Michigan since 2010, potential risks and impacts, and viable legal strategies to regulate fracking impacts as part of FLOW’s ordinance program for Conway Township. FLOW works with the township to determine what areas of concern are most pertinent to the community to regulate, and the public presentations dually serve as a forum for citizens and leaders to express the topics they hope local legal strategies can address.

“The turnout was impressive,” says Olson, “and the citizens demonstrated not only a real concern but a remarkable knowledge of the issues and context of fracking in Michigan and in their own community.” The GeoSouthern Energy Corporation drilled an exploratory well in Conway Township, granted by a 2013 permit. The permit approved three million gallons of water and fracking fluid to explore a one-mile radius area. The exploratory well is located on a property that, [according to the owner in a Denver Post article from September 2013](#), was drilled three times in the past 30 years without success.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Elizabeth Kirkwood

The February 6th presentation in Fowlerville was the first of two public presentations FLOW will host for Conway Township. Then, the FLOW staff will carefully craft a package of recommendations for Township leaders to consider incorporating into their local ordinances and laws as they see fit.

“The fracking process is largely under-regulated or exempt from key federal and state laws that protect common water, land, air, and public health,” says Kirkwood. “The local governments are left holding the bag when it comes to protecting their citizens from the potential harms and risks of the fracking process or any other industrial processes that come to their town. Our program empowers local governments and their citizens to prepare themselves in advance to handle it,” she says.

153 ½ EAST FRONT STREET
SUITE 203 C
TRAVERSE CITY, MI 49684

231 944 1568

INFO@FLOWFORWATER.ORG

Fracking for oil and natural gas is exempt from many regulatory laws at both the federal and state levels, including the Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water Acts, the Great Lakes Compact, and Michigan's Water Withdrawal Act. Despite zoning prohibitions to regulate drilling, construction production, and operation of oil and gas wells, townships still do maintain legal authority to regulate ancillary activities, including roads, truck traffic, pipelines, flow lines, gathering lines, location of wells, disclosure of chemical use, air pollution and more. Moreover, townships can rely on other sources of authority such as police power ordinances and franchise agreements.

FLOW has delivered a similar educational overview to over twenty communities throughout Michigan in the past year. This informational presentation is based on FLOW's November 2012 report, ["Horizontal Fracturing for Oil and Natural Gas in Michigan: Legal Strategies and Tools for Communities and Citizens."](#) FLOW's report highlights legal strategies and policies designed to assist local governments in safeguarding their communities against the unprecedented and cumulative impacts of fracking.

Horizontal fracking requires injecting a cocktail of up to 21 million gallons of water and over 750 chemicals under high pressure into wells in order to fracture deep shale formations and release oil and natural gas. A review of literature on fracking and its associated risks reveals several concerns: (1) massive water withdrawals; (2) groundwater contamination; (3) surface spills and leaks; (4) wastewater management; (5) land-use impacts; (6) truck traffic and burden on infrastructure; (7) lack of public disclosure.

[An op-ed piece from January 12, 2014 the news service LivingstonDaily.com published](#) outlined that, no matter where Conway Township officials and citizens choose to draw their party lines in regards to fracking, "there clearly can be an impact on the surrounding community where fracking is conducted, and it is more than fair for the local communities to have some controls in place to make sure they are minimal."

The next FLOW public workshop for Conway Township will be held in late March, early April. Conway Township like many of the neighboring townships in Livingston County is interested in proactively protecting the area's valuable natural resources for agriculture and high quality of life. To ensure different viewpoints on this topic, Conway Township has invited the Department of Environmental Quality to speak to local officials about its permitting role for the oil and gas industry this coming week of February 10.

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