

# Nepessing News

Spring 2016 -Edition



SIERRA  
CLUB  
FOUNDED 1892

*The Nepessing Group represents the Sierra Club in Genesee, Lapeer and Northern Oakland counties.*

## PURE MICHIGAN?

by Denny Crispell

Is there anyone out there who has not heard of Flint's water crisis?

I can't imagine there is. It is hard to wrap your mind around the tragedy. Some call it a crime scene. Some call it a racial issue, others blame politics. But what I see is an American city of white, black, democrats, republicans and independents, all let down by our government.

We thought we were protected by agencies like the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and the federal Environmental Protection Agency. Now we don't trust them, may never. And if you spend more time thinking about it, you may realize the biggest culprit in this fiasco is our elected Governor Rick Snyder. He showed no regard for the health and safety of the children of Flint. You have to wonder if he really cares about any of our children in Michigan. If he didn't care about the water they drink, does he really care about their education, of if they can find

a sustainable job someday. It appears like he only cared about the bottom line, not the people of Michigan.

I must be getting old. I can't remember if he is Republican or Democrat, but it doesn't matter. He did not connect the dots! Let's see: Lead and drinking water equals poison.

But a few things you and I can do to help are donate water, join demonstrations and marches to make noise, attend classes and meetings to understand how this water crisis happened. You can donate to the United Way or look up [flintkids.org](http://flintkids.org)

We might have to pick up shovels to help replace lead pipes. But we are all in this together!

As long as we are all thinking about the importance of safe, clean drinking water, many who live in the country with their own wells are feeling relieved that they don't depend on a municipal water supply.

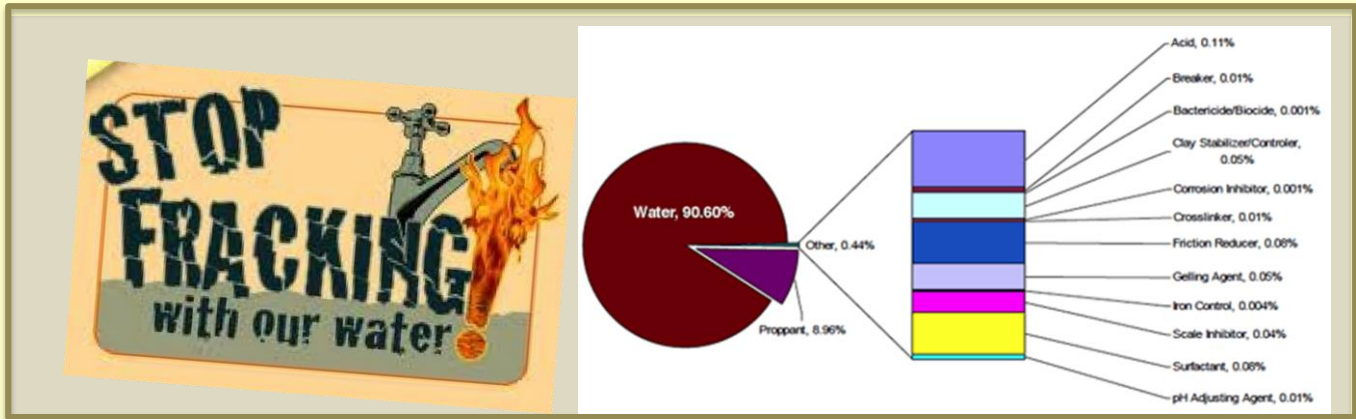
Maybe they will reconsider if they would want a fracking well in their neighborhood. Remember, this is deep well hydraulic

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fracturing for oil and gas, involving millions of gallons of water mixed with chemicals. For some reason they have been exempted from the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts, so they don't have to disclose what they are pumping into the ground. They don't want to alarm you by what may contaminate your well water

Right now you don't have any say if your neighbor sells his mineral rights. But you have time to [sign a petition](#) to have a Ban Fracking in Michigan initiative on the ballot. We need more signatures. You can call [Robert Simpson at 810-230-0704](#) to find where to sign or how to help collect signatures. Or attend a Sierra Club meeting on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 pm at the Prah Center of Mott Community College 1401 East Court St, Flint.



## Frack Attack

By Robert Simpson

High Volume horizontal hydraulic fracturing, commonly called *fracking*, is a technique of extracting natural gas and oil from fissures deep underground. It has been touted by industry as the pathway to energy independence and a “clean” alternative to coal. The problems with this technique are many and there have been so many people harmed by the process that 2 states (New York & Vermont) have passed bans on the practice. Different areas have many different problems resulting from fracking including water pollution in Pennsylvania, natural gas in water pipes causing the ignition of faucet fires in Colorado, a dramatic increase in the number and severity of earthquakes in Oklahoma and Ohio and depletion of the already drought

stricken California water supply. Not only are tremendous volumes of water used (10s of millions of gallons for each well), the water is contaminated with dozens of toxic chemicals in significant quantities in order to penetrate and lubricate the bedrock and that water is permanently contaminated and must be stored underground, where it will eventually enter the water table. The chemicals used for fracking are considered a proprietary secret and the law does not require companies to disclose their formula. The operation of a frack well creates contaminated waste in the form of a toxic mud which must be disposed of by burial, where it remains a time bomb which will eventually leak into the environment. Methane emissions produced during the fracking process are much greater contributors to global warming than CO<sub>2</sub>, by a factor of 86x and many studies of health in

the area of frack sites have shown thousands of people have been damaged by the industry. Of course on the financial side, many people who had contamination of their wells or property have dramatic losses in the value of their home, especially if their water has been permanently poisoned.

In response to this, the Committee to Ban Fracking has undertaken citizen initiatives over the last 3 years in attempts to follow the lead of other states and countries which have outlawed the practice of fracking permanently. This past June, Maryland placed a 30 month moratorium on fracking, which may be renewed when the time limit grows near in late 2017. Michigan attempts to place a permanent ban on fracking through LuAnne Kozma’s latest drive which started back in May of 2015 and after a brief respite when it looked as if the initiative had finished short of the required number of

signatures, lawyers for LBF opined that the 150,000+ signatures collected in 2015 could be counted. Many of the Sierra Club members who soldiered through last year's campaign decided to try for the 120,000 more needed to reach the total and actually succeed in attaining the goal. This portion, which will attempt to place the ban on the November ballot will end on 31 May. Any readers who would like to convince your friends, neighbors and complete strangers that this is worthwhile supporting, please sign up to collect signatures. Donations of money can be used to hire professional signatures gatherers and advertise the cause. Yours truly is heading up the Nepessing area of Lapeer and Genesee County with Linda Berker and if you want to get involved, contact me at [810-230-0704](tel:810-230-0704) or [rjsimpson944@hotmail.com](mailto:rjsimpson944@hotmail.com)



## Environmental News Around the Globe

By Robert Simpson

1/15/2016 - Yesterday, President Obama took a huge step toward keeping fossil fuels in the ground. His Administration announced that it is going to put a moratorium on new coal leasing on our public lands until it reviews the impacts this program has on our planet. This is a big victory for the movement to keep

fossil fuels in the ground. We're gaining momentum in this fight. In 2014, Friends of the Earth filed a lawsuit to compel the Obama Administration to do this review. The suit was initially dismissed, but we

appealed -- and NOW we've won!

Remember when you signed that **petition to ban microbeads**? We have great news for you—and our oceans! Due in part to your support, the House and the Senate unanimously passed the bill banning microbeads with remarkable ease. On Dec. 28, President Barack Obama signed the **Microbead-Free Waters Act of 2015**—prohibiting the selling and distributing of products containing microbeads—into law. Under the new law, companies have until July 2017 to ensure the tiny plastic spheres are out of their products.

**Great news! President Obama has just protected over 1.8 million acres of California desert!**

The Mojave Trails National Monument's vast open spaces include ancient trade routes of indigenous Americans as well as historic Route 66, and essential habitat for desert tortoise and bighorn sheep linking two national parks. Sand to Snow, rising from the Sonoran desert floor to Mount San Gorgonio, Southern California's highest peak, is a botanically rich tapestry of ecosystems and cultural sites.

The Castle Mountains include some of the region's finest Joshua tree, pinyon pine and juniper forests. Now, these lands are protected for generations to come.





### Court Returns Polar Bear Protections Across 120 Million Acres

A huge win for polar bears: This week the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 2010 decision to protect more than 120 million acres as critical habitat for polar bears. In its ruling the court reversed a 2013 lower-court decision that shot down that designation after it was challenged by the state of Alaska and the oil and gas industry.

These habitat protections are vital as polar bears struggle against the climate crisis and melting sea ice. Without help, scientists predict, more than two-thirds of the world's polar bears -- including all of those in Alaska -- will be gone by 2050. Arctic sea ice, which polar bears depend on for hunting and raising their cubs, has been hitting record lows this winter.

"This decision gives polar bears some breathing room, but President Obama and other leaders still have to move fast to leave dirty fossil fuels in the ground to give this species and so many others a true shot at survival," said Kassie Siegel, a Center for Biological Diversity attorney who filed the original legal petition that gained Endangered Species Act protection for the bears.

Mar 4, 2016 John R.

Platt Sumatran orangutans have been [dying](#) for some good news, and they finally got some. According to the

results of an [extensive three-year survey](#), Sumatra may hold as many as 14,600 orangutans. That's more than double the previous population estimate of 6,600 for these critically endangered apes. A team of researchers crisscrossed Sumatra by foot, walking into remote habitats to find evidence of orangutans in areas where no one had ever looked them before. They found fresh orangutan nests in peat swamps, in western areas of the island that had never previously been surveyed, and even in partially logged forests. Nests are the best marker for orangutan presence, since the apes build new nests every night and the old nests take about a year to degrade. The surveys involved back-breaking work undertaken by a dedicated team of researchers. "Sometimes getting to these sites required a week of walking and then a week to walk back," said the project's lead researcher, Serge Wich a professor at Liverpool John Moores University in the United Kingdom. "The

mountains are very steep and unforgiving. That's why in the past we didn't go much into those areas." The peat swamps also proved more than a little challenging. "You're up to your waist or higher in very acidic water," Wich said. "It's not good for your legs." The effort, however, was worth it, as it revealed many more orangutans than they had expected. The apes in the higher elevations, in particular, surprised them. "I certainly did not expect orangutans to be that high up so commonly in almost every area that we went to," Wich said. "It seemed very common." The apes also seemed to be doing fairly well in previously logged areas, although they existed at lower population densities in those regions. "Some of those areas that had been logged by large concessions are growing back to some extent," Wich said. "That indicates that maybe we can still have some timber harvesting and still have orangutans."

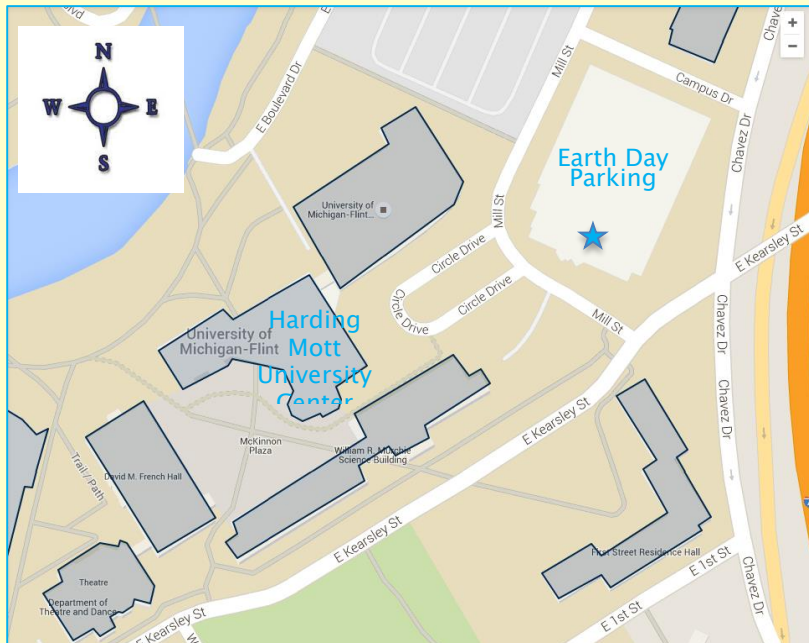


#### Friends of the Flint River Trail Bike Rides:

It's almost spring - and that means it's time to get out the bicycle/air up the tires / oil the chain - and get riding! Sunday rides occur EVERY Sunday - May through October - starting at 2:00 PM from the OLD Farmers' Market. These are gently paced and family friendly rides of about ten to twelve miles in length. There are no fees and no memberships: "JUST SHOW UP AND RIDE." Helmets are STRONGLY encouraged. The Friends of the Flint River Trail is a chapter of the Flint River Watershed Coalition ([flintriver.org](http://flintriver.org)). Questions: Jack Minore at [jacksonmin@aol.com](mailto:jacksonmin@aol.com).



**Earth Day Celebration 2016**  
 Come celebrate with us on April 16, 2016  
 from 10 am to 3 pm at the  
 University Of Michigan Flint,  
 Harding Mott University Center!  
 SIERRA CLUB LAKE NEPESSING WILL BE GIVING AWAY  
 FREE WHITE PINE TREE SEEDLINGS AND GETTING SIGNATURES  
 FOR THE BAN FRACKING INITIATIVE.  
 Parking available in the ramp on Mill Street



## SNAPSHOTS:

Otter Lake Hike:



Tours walks meetings and Marches, send me what you have.

[Rebecca.Gale@mcc.edu](mailto:Rebecca.Gale@mcc.edu)

Come make new friends and memories with us, we are eager to share what we know and a love of nature.  
Continued on Page 7.

The **man-made drinking water crisis in Flint** has made [international headlines](#). For more than a year, state officials -- from Gov. Snyder to his appointed Flint emergency managers -- exposed an entire city to the **risk of lead poisoning in their drinking water**. It's a public health **catastrophe with long-lasting consequences for the children** under the age of six in Flint who will suffer neurological damage for the rest of their lives.

Sierra Club has been **working to help the people of Flint** but we need to do more. Another organization doing good work in the city is the **Genesee County Hispanic/Latino Collaborative, which is focusing on Flint's immigrant community**, making sure that undocumented people have access to clean water, filters, and information. **But they need [financial support](#) and [volunteers](#)**. If you can make a donation or a commitment of time, please consider contacting them today and offering them your support.

In the midst of this catastrophe, **Sierra Club Michigan Chapter has been working to help** in these ways:

- **We oppose charging Flint residents for poisoned water, so we are keeping pressure on Gov. Snyder.** The state--not Flint residents--should be paying for water poisoned by actions of the state.
- **We are working with EPA Region 5 Acting Director Bob Kaplan** to ensure that the EPA has support for implementing its emergency order requiring the state to act swiftly in restoring safe drinking water for Flint's residents, including replacing the city's dangerous lead pipes. Early on, we wrote to EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy requesting a Flint investigation. Within a few days of that letter, the EPA announced it would investigate, including assessing the actions of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.
- **Our Chapter Executive Committee appointed a former member of the EPA's national Safe Drinking Water Advisory Council, Cyndi Roper, to be the Chapter's volunteer representative on safe drinking water issues.** It's clear we need to strengthen federal safe drinking water laws so fewer people--especially those in older communities with aging infrastructure--are exposed to lead.
- **We have submitted comments to the EPA on a proposed new lead and copper drinking water rule** and will continue to advocate for better laws and more infrastructure funding.
- **Chapter staff and volunteers participated in a massive protest at the governor's State of the State address** and issued a public statement on the situation in Flint.
- **Our volunteer leaders met with the national president of Sierra Club, Aaron Mair, and came away with a strong commitment of support for Flint.** President Mair also personally contributed \$1,500 to help organizing efforts in the city.
- **Our local Nepessing Group of Flint area volunteers has conducted public presentations** explaining the Flint situation, distributing water and finding ways to recycle many single-use plastic bottles.

Our focus is on helping the people of Flint and holding the Snyder administration accountable for restoring safe drinking water to this struggling community. We will keep you posted on our progress. In the meantime, if you can support the [Genesee County Hispanic/Latino Collaborative's efforts](#), please do.

Thank you.  
Sincerely,  
Gail Philbin  
Michigan Chapter Director

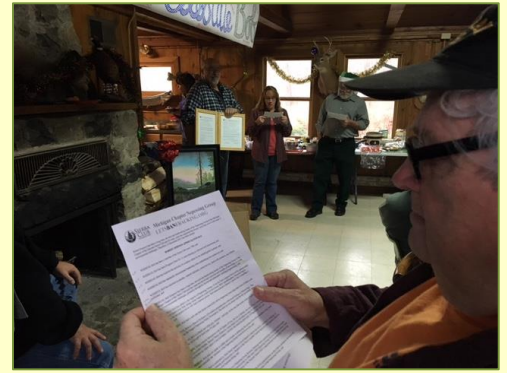




Anne Woiwode Retirement Party



Lobbying In Lansing



NAACP Press Conference



Meeting with Kildee



2016 Christmas Party

← Linda Hoff - Feb. 2016 Gerrymandering  
↓ Dr. Kevin Bai - March 2016 Electric Vehicles



Water Walk 2016



Terry Lodge and Melissa Maes - Jan. 2016 Fracking and Water Crisis





Nepessing Group  
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Make everyday Earth Day,  
please recycle!

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*Visit us on the Web!*

[www.michigan.sierraclub.org/nepessing](http://www.michigan.sierraclub.org/nepessing)

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#### **Board Members and Volunteers**

At-Large	Fred Townsend
At-Large	Ellen Waara
At-Large	Jack Minore
At-Large	Carol Graham
At-Large	Thomas Haley
At-Large	Linda Berker
At-Large	Terry Reechko
At-Large	Laurie Tata
At-Large	Denny Crispell

#### **Officers**

Chair	Denny Crispell
Vice Chair	Laurie Tata
Treasurer	Richard Naber
Secretary	Mike Haley

#### **Committees**

Conservation	Ellen Waara
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