

***Community's water, cleanup at risk
Drilling Contamination Spreads as Polluter's Bankruptcy Looms
Incident demonstrates need for FRAC Act and stronger
oversight***

Clark, WY, 10/01 -- Clark Resource Council has learned that Windsor Energy Group, LLC recently put its assets up for bid. At a public meeting in September Windsor representatives explained that benzene is also above regulatory levels east of Line Creek where Windsor had guaranteed it would not go. Assuming no buyer is found, the logical next step is bankruptcy: leaving the community's groundwater, and cleanup of the pollution, in doubt.

"Every thing Industry told us would not happen, has," says Deb Thomas local resident and organizer for the Clark Resource Council. "Before the first operators of this project bankrupted, we were told that drilling was safe and no toxic chemicals were used. Since Windsor bought the development, we've had years of leaking waste pits, illegal dumping of drilling fluids, inadequate engineering, and finally, the blow out, which left us with contaminated drinking water aquifers. Windsor said the contamination plume wouldn't move into private water wells or jump the Creek, and it did both. Now we fear that Windsor will join their predecessors by bankrupting and simply walk away from their mess."

Windsor Energy Group's Crosby 25-3 gas well blew out in the small community of Clark, Wyoming three years ago. Contamination plumes have continued to move since then, and how clean up will occur remains undecided. The blowout resulted in a 10 million cubic foot plume of groundwater contamination or more than 100 Olympic-size swimming pools worth.

The plume has contaminated drinking water aquifers, 2 private water wells and natural springs with benzene, diesel range organics, and an extensive list of toxic chemicals. The plume is also putting more than 20 downstream drinking water wells at risk. As much as 300,000 gallons of contaminated water has dumped daily into the Line Creek drainage, which then flows into the Clark Fork of the Yellowstone River.

Clark Resource Council, Powder River Basin Resource Council and Earthworks' Oil and Gas Accountability Project emphasize that the experience in Clark shows that State agencies are not adequately equipped to address the impacts and risks associated with drilling projects.

"I want other communities who are facing development to understand that they're at risk from the oil and gas industry's cavalier regard for the environment and human health," says impacted resident, Dick Bilodeau. "When oil and gas companies screw up, the results are neither simple, nor cheap, to clean up. We need adequate federal oversight to protect areas under development, and complete disclosure so that impacted people can determine what health problems they're facing now and will be in the future."

In Wyoming the State's Voluntary Remediation Program allows polluters like Windsor to remediate contamination and then be released from liability. With Windsor Energy Group's bankruptcy looming, Bilodeau and other community members fear that the extent of the contamination will never be adequately assessed and clean up will never happen.

The news of contamination crossing under Line Creek and Windsor's asset sale comes just after the EPA released its investigative finding on water contamination in Pavillion, Wyo, which residents fear is associated with EnCana's deep gas operations.

"These cases demonstrate the clear and present danger posed by drilling operations under current regulation," says Bruce Baizel, staff attorney for EARTHWORKS' Oil & Gas Accountability Project. "They clearly show the urgent need for incremental federal regulation, like the FRAC Act now before Congress, and they also show that the FRAC Act only begins to address the need for stronger oversight."

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For More Information

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