



Your Environment

A collaborative information resource for the Muskegon County Community

Autumn 2012

The presentation at the MCECC quarterly meeting was made by our own Jerry Garman, Project Leader for Sidock Group, who discussed his study and inventory of old or abandoned oil wells, and the risks they pose to human health and the environment. These old borings, which often extend over a 1,000 feet deep into the underlying bedrock, pose risks for leaking oil or natural gas. While more recent borings (e.g., from approximately the 1970's onward) were better plugged with concrete-like material, older borings were often poorly plugged with iron balls, and filled with the drilled-out rock and "mud" that came from the boring, and even stumps or debris. The older borings may act as conduits for petroleum to float up to the surface, and can present risks for potential cave-in hazards. Associated petroleum production facilities and equipment included tank batteries, and pipelines that transported the oil across the surface of the ground. For health and safety purposes, the old borings and abandoned wells should be investigated, and the high-risk wells should be identified, managed, and cleaned-up.

Jerry discussed a study he helped lead with a group of local community leaders, the Preliminary Assessment of the North Muskegon Oil Field. This study focused on an especially dense cluster of these old borings in a 28 square mile area in Laketon and Muskegon Townships, and the Cities of North Muskegon and Muskegon. 621 oil and gas-related borings were found to be located in this area. The Muskegon oil boom began with the successful completion of the Reeths #1 well in 1927, which according to a Central Michigan University historical paper, placed "Michigan solidly on the oil map." This discovery resulted in a local oil boom that provided many Muskegonites with well paying jobs during the Great Depression. This activity was likely viewed quite favorably at the time, but today we are more circumspect, as instances of contaminated soil, groundwater and surface water have been documented and ongoing oil and gas releases are known. This includes the ongoing release of crude petroleum in Fenner Bayou. This oil leak into a canal off Bear Lake has been a top priority of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality for over a decade. This past summer the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency completed some preliminary investigation of this leaking boring. While the community would like to find a way to stop this crude petroleum release, the financial and technical challenges are large, so the saga continues...

Good Websites Good Information

EPA CARE Program
www.epa.gov/care

EPA Lead Safety
www.epa.gov/lead

E-Waste Recycling
www.reconnectpartnership.com

County-wide Health Concerns
www.muskegonhealth.net

Link from National Wildlife
Federation
GARDENER'S GUIDE TO
GLOBAL WARMING
Challenges and Solutions:
[www.nwf.org/gardenersguide/
Gardeners_Guide.pdf](http://www.nwf.org/gardenersguide/Gardeners_Guide.pdf)