

2012 — 5 To Establish Regulation of Silica Sand Mining

Silica sand has been mined for hundreds of years as it has many uses, from paving roads to filtering drinking waters. Now there is a new and significant demand for silica sand for use in hydro-fracking, a controversial gas extraction method that can have devastating impacts on local air, water quality and the people and wildlife that live nearby. There is a lack of regulatory oversight in the hydro-fracking extraction process. The Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America wants to be sure that regulatory oversight is in place before large silica sand extraction sites are approved. The land will be forever changed once a silica sand extraction site is permitted. Because of this, the Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America is confident that those entrusted by their constituents to do so will consider what is best for all those impacted, including neighbors, taxpayers, outdoor enthusiasts and wildlife.

WHEREAS, silica sand or “frac sand” mining has come to North America and the Midwest, and

WHEREAS, there is a new and significant demand for silica sand for hydrofracking, a controversial gas extraction method, and

WHEREAS, there is little or no environmental review by local, state or national government of the extensive silica mining taking place in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and elsewhere, and

WHEREAS, the Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America has the following concerns about unregulated silica sand mining, including:

- air quality concerns related to silica, including silicosis, which can lead to permanent heart and lung disease,
- traffic and safety issues, including costs to maintain highway surfaces subject to increased truck traffic,
- removal of the overburden and its impact on wildlife and plant life,
- groundwater and surface water discharges, and its affect on local wells and drinking water,
- noise pollution, caused by mining, washing and transporting sand during extended hours,
- financial burden on adjacent landowners, whose property values may decrease,
- negative effect on scenic travel corridors, and
- the size of the acreages to be mined.

IT IS RESOLVED by the Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America in Convention at Wabasha MN on April 22, 2012 that all levels of government with oversight and regulatory authority over silica (frac) sand mining implement a moratorium on issuing permits for extracting silica (frac) sand. If/when the moratorium is lifted; we would require, at the very minimum, an environmental assessment worksheet for each proposed extraction site. This assessment would include research and evaluation by highway engineers, water and air quality experts, and wildlife and fishery biologists, provided to the designated government agencies to approve or disapprove the application. Public hearings would follow the completed environmental review. Prior to sand extraction site approval, mining companies would submit a written, contractual stewardship plan that provides proof of financial capability and assurance of the reclamation and restoration of the site.

*Submitted by:
Minnesota Division Izaak Walton League of America*