

TURTLE MOUNTAIN BAND OF CHIPPEWA INDIANS



Larry DeCoteau

District Four Tribal Council Representative

Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians

Testimony on Bureau of Land Management's Hydraulic Fracturing Rule's Impacts on Indian Tribal Energy Development

April 18, 2012

Honorable Members of the Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska Native Affairs,

My Name is Larry DeCoteau and I am the District Four Representative for the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians. This is my first term on the council and I am honored to be here today. On behalf of my entire tribe I thank you for the opportunity to be here today to provide testimony on this important and dynamic issue. Turtle Mountain, as you may know, recently voted to ban hydraulic fracturing on our reservation. To date, I am under the understanding that we are the only tribe in the country to ban fracturing on its reservation. The fact that we unanimously voted to do so is much less important than why we decided to ban fracking. We, as elected officials of the Tribe, have a duty to know everything involved in the fracking process, we need to know the impact of fracking on our lands; everything from the environmental impact, the potential for the process to harm our water, the chemicals used in the process and the ratios of those chemicals used, the manpower needed for fracking and the ability of the oil companies to ensure those individuals respect our people and honor our ways. Fracking, as it's currently being done in the western part of the state of North Dakota is not a process that interests us at Turtle Mountain.

We will allow hydraulic fracking on our reservation when and if it can be proven to us that it can be done with zero impact on our water, with full disclosure of any chemicals used and the amounts of each chemical being used. We will allow fracking on our reservation when we can institute a detailed set of

laws that ensure the process is safe, respectful of our people and culture and does not harm the environment. We will decide when that has been proven to us, not the federal government. We do not need rules and regulations proposed by the Bureau of Land Management. We do not need yet another federal bureaucracy dictating to us what rules we have to play by, and worse, dictating to us when and where fracking can take place. We are a sovereign nation, fully capable of writing our own laws and then enforcing them.

A huge consideration when we banned fracking on our reservation was the fact that we did not yet have laws that dictated the process and ensured the safe-keeping our precious land and natural resources. The federal government dictated to us, through a now infamous, one-sided and shameful treaty, where we would live, we do not need more directives from the federal government. What we need from the federal government is less rules and more respect for our sovereignty. Many, many of our ancestors fought for and died for our sovereignty, I ask you to please respect that fact and let each tribe decide what appropriate rules and regulations are right for them, for their people, for their culture.

Turtle Mountain people know our land best, we know our resources, we know what methods of mining and drilling we are comfortable with, and we are best suited to make the decisions that impact our land and our people. We respectfully request that the Bureau of Land Management not adopt rules and regulations impacting Indian lands and leave that duty to the those best suited to make the decisions that impact the lands and the people they were elected to represent: The Tribes.