

ARE YOU ON A WELL?

Mega Threat From a Mega Church Up the Road

You have probably heard something about the ongoing effort to construct one of the largest churches in the world (approximately 120,000 square feet) with a potential occupancy load of 5800 just across the Frederick County line from upper Montgomery County.

This massive undertaking proposed by the Global Mission Church now outgrowing its buildings in Silver Spring would be the size of the Nashville Convention Center. As such it threatens the historic vistas from Sugarloaf mountain; the only water source for thousands of Montgomery County residents; longstanding farmland preservation plans; congestion on state and safety on rural roads; and the degradation of the water quality of pristine Little Bennett Creek and potentially the wells of all Darnestown residents.

Our well water in Darnestown comes from one source - an aquifer called the Piedmont Sole Source Aquifer-- that is formed by highly fractured rock geology interconnected over a large geographic area.

In designating the ground water areas in Montgomery County (Poolesville and the Route 28 corridor), the EPA stated that:

1. The Piedmont Sole Source Aquifer services the area population with 50% or more of its drinking water needs.

2. There are no economical alternative drinking water sources, or combination of sources, to supply the designated service area.

3. While the quality of the area's ground water is considered to be good, it is vulnerable to contamination due to the relatively thin soil cover and rapid movement of ground water in fractured rock, coupled with increasing development and other land uses. Thin soil cover may allow contaminants to be rapidly introduced into the ground water with minimal assimilation into the soil. Rapid movement of ground water through fractured rock can allow contaminants to spread quickly, once introduced.

4. Cleanup of contaminated fractured aquifers is usually difficult to achieve and is an expensive, long term effort.

The Global Mission complex would not only draw from the same water source that supplies Darnestown wells, but it would also release waste water and sewage into a massive untested sand mound system sitting atop highly fractured geology. At 2 acres in size this type of standalone septic system -- which have a history of failures-- would be the second largest of its kind in the state of Maryland.

The Montgomery Countryside Alliance and other local groups have been challenging, over several years, Frederick County's approval of the project on both legal and environmental grounds. A number of appeals are pending requiring additional legal support. In addition, neighbors near the

proposed site have filed suit against a secondary access road required by Fire and Rescue that, if constructed, would greatly alter the tranquility of their neighborhood and violate long standing covenants.

Concern has always centered on the massive scale of the project and on the incompatibility with available water and transportation resources.

Darnestown residents are encouraged to:

1. Have your well water tested to establish a base line for possible future damage claims should the Church be built and the septic system fails—
2. Write County executive Ike Leggett (oce@montgomerycountymd.gov) and urge him to recognize the adverse environmental, transportation and quality of life effects on Montgomery county residents and urge him to help find a more suitable location for the church.
3. Learn more and send a tax deductible contribution to the Montgomery Countryside Alliance (www.mocoalliance.org) to help support its Legal Fund at:

Montgomery Countryside Alliance, P.O. Box 24, Poolesville, MD 20837

Submitted by Darnestown resident Oakley Johnson, Vice President, Montgomery Countryside Alliance