

MEDIA RELEASE

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COALITION THREATENS FEDERAL SUIT TO FORCE CLEANUP OF MERCURY CONTAMINATION

NEW ORLEANS (Dec. 7, 2006) – A coalition of local environmental groups has announced its intent to file a federal lawsuit against EnerVest Operating LLC, a major operator of natural gas wells in the Monroe Gas Field, to force cleanup of mercury-contaminated wetlands and other soils at gas fields in Ouachita, Union and Morehouse parishes.

The Tulane Environmental Law Clinic filed the Notice of Intent to Sue on behalf of the Louisiana Environmental Action Network, Delta (Louisiana) Chapter of the Sierra Club, Gulf Restoration Network, and Louisiana Audubon Council.

EnerVest controls more than 3,000 natural gas wells in the Monroe Field. Many of the wells are equipped with mercury meters, which hold as much as 10 pounds of mercury each, to measure gas pressure to determine the volume of natural gas produced. Pools of mercury have been found under the meters, which have contaminated the soils and wetlands around rivers and bayous in and near Monroe.

Mercury meters have been phased out in other parts of the country and on federal property in Louisiana in favor of non-polluting, non-mercury flow meters. “We can't understand why EnerVest persists in using these meters when gas producers were required to clean up mercury and replace the meters in the D'Arbonne and Upper

Ouachita National Wildlife Refuges,” says Barry Kohl, Louisiana Audubon Council.

“Why are they continuing to contaminate private property?”

Currently, there are 41 mercury-in-fish advisories statewide, including seven within the Monroe Gas Field. The Ouachita River, Bayou DeSiard and Black Lake have “mercury-in-fish” advisories that caution pregnant women, women who are breast-feeding, and children younger than seven years of age to limit consumption of fish.

“Commercial fishing in the Ouachita River has been impacted by mercury contamination,” says Marylee Orr, executive director, Louisiana Environmental Action Network. “A local man was poisoned from eating mercury-contaminated fish. We are standing up and saying ‘no’ to the continued pollution by the natural gas industry in our state.”

The Coalition asks EnerVest to reply and to present a plan to clean up the mercury waste. If it does not, the environmental organizations say they are committed to the filing a federal suit to force the clean-up.

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