I am Ken Schmitt. My wife Laura and I both come from a long line of farmers dating back to the 1800's. Along with our 4 children ages 3 to 9, we raise grass-fed beef in Western Chippewa County, Wisconsin.

We now live on the Southern edge of an industrial frac-sand mining district which extends North across the county line into Barron County. Prior to 2008 none of us dreamed that our agricultural area would ever be degraded so much in 6 short years. Frac sand is needed to extract hard to reach natural gas and oil deposits, and it is mined from the sandstone that underlies much of Wisconsin. We now have more industrial sand mines in these 2 counties than existed in the entire state 10 years ago.

The Village of New Auburn straddles the county line. Within 7 miles of the village there are more than 11 frac-sand mines with over 3000 acres permitted since mid 2011. Most of these are expected to expand in the next few years. There are also 4 frac-sand drying plants within about 4 miles of the village with talk of possibly 2 more. All of these industrial frac-sand facilities – totaling about 150 in Wisconsin - have received air permits from DNR, which acts as the enforcement agency for the EPA under the Clean Air Act.

DNR has permitted all of these facilities without considering the fugitive dust sources of each facility, using the same 2.5 micron ambient air rating without counting cumulative air impacts of multiple facilities or emissions from the transporting of the sand. No regulating agency in Wisconsin requires any monitoring for 2.5 particulate or crystalline silica, so no one knows what hazards citizens around these facilities face in Wisconsin. Is waiting for people to get sick from toxic air pollutants fulfilling either the EPA or DNR's responsibility to protect citizens, as required by the Clean Air Act?

Many of these facilities also use well water for washing of the sand, degrading our freshwater resources, and permanently ruin many acres of very productive farmland. I believe this rule will simply trade the environmental issues of coal for the environmental issues of natural gas and further drive the destruction of farmland and degradation of freshwater in Wisconsin. The same degradation is occurring in the areas where gas and oil is actually extracted. We as a nation need to dedicate substantial resources to the research and development of technology to store energy generated from wind and solar on a large scale. If we can accomplish that then we will be well on our way to moving past the fossil fuel age. Sooner or later we need to move beyond fossil fuels because they are a finite resource. Wouldn't it be better to do it on our time table than on the resource's time table? We are wrecking far too much of our productive arable farmland & clean fresh drinking water in this country to get the last bit of fossil fuels. Humans have gotten along without oil and gas for thousands of years, but we can't survive without food and drinkable water. How short-sighted can we be? What kind of legacy are we leaving our children and grandchildren?

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I know much of what I said did not relate to carbon, however to just look at carbon is much too narrow of a view. EPA must consider all the negative impacts of each avenue, such as the frac-sand mines in my state, serious issues at the frac sites etc. If you do, you will realize how important it is to move beyond fossil fuels, they are finite.

As a farmer sitting through 5-6 hours of these hearings I cannot stress enough the importance of preserving good arable farm land and good water resources. The human race cannot survive without both of these.

The end of the stone age did not end because we ran out of stones!