

BC Environmental Network (BCEN)

BCEN Call for Ban on Sour Gas and Unconventional Natural Gas Extraction

British Columbia Environmental Network Proposed Resolution

“WHEREAS extensive environmental and health damages are being caused to the Residents of Peace River Area, their animals, their water and their livelihoods by sour gas wells, pipeline malfunctions, and leaks due to the sour gas industry,

“WHEREAS extensive environmental and health damages are caused by horizontal drilling and high pressure hydrofracturing gas extraction techniques due to the contamination of water, soil and air by the toxic chemicals used in drilling and fracturing, and the naturally occurring toxic chemicals brought to the surface from deep in the ground,

“WHEREAS these environmental and human and animal health damages will have damaging economic consequences on agricultural and residential property use and value, and on farming, tourism, forestry, schools and ecological and recreational businesses,

“WHEREAS the infrastructure costs of building and repairing roads, water treatment facilities, and other public services would far exceed any economic benefit to local communities, and

“WHEREAS it is yet to be proven that the green house effects of the production and use of natural gas produced by horizontal drilling and hydrofracturing are any less than those of the production and use of coal when the life cycle emissions of natural gas production and the higher impact of methane as a green house gas are taken into account.

“Be It Resolved that the British Columbia Environmental Network calls on the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia to enact a ban on permitting sour gas wells on Peace River Farmland and on unconventional gas extraction that uses horizontal drilling and hydro-fracturing to explore, mine, or extract gas in the Province of British Columbia.”

Northern Update: Sour gas industry assault on Farmland and Peace River

Residents (from: ECOBC, Connecting people and nature, website)

Well here I am at last. I have been trying to put together more information and perhaps letters from other folks. However, most folks are too afraid to be identified due to repercussions from the RCMP.

I trust you will not think I am somewhat “long-winded” in this but I feel a bit of background is in order for those who are not familiar with this area.

The Peace River area was once a very large farming and ranching area. Grain farming, forage and cattle, horse and sheep. In the late forties and early fifties we had rows of grain elevators and some years shipped more grain from here than was shipped from points in the prairies. Until a few short

years ago, we had huge cattle auctions with buyers from all over Canada and the US. Our sheep auctions (where I was involved) were for several years, the largest in Canada, with as high as five thousand head on offer. We had some of the purest water courses and lots of it. Our rivers, creeks and wetlands were the finest and purest. Most of the farms and ranches had huge “dugouts” which supplied the homes and livestock with water all year round.

Then the drilling companies moved in. They came in such numbers and with such force that most people were taken completely by surprise. They moved onto private land without so much as a howdy-do and literally took over. Very soon vast areas were covered with drill sites, pipelines, gathering plants, etc. Seismic roads cut through field and pastures. Fences are cut, livestock let loose and in many instances damage to property and livestock not uncommon.

The light and flares from these installations create an everlasting day. The noise and fumes from the diesel generators and the screaming of the drills twenty-four hours a day makes for very little sleep for land owners. The industry came up with the brilliant idea of putting “noise buffers” around the drill sites. They used round hay bales which of course did no good at all. Wasted good feed!

Then we have the wells leaking H₂S gas or even blow-outs of the gas. I imagine you all or at least most of you know, of my losses in the 1998 three day gas leak which killed most of my livestock and pets. This gas leak resulted in damage to my lungs and central nervous system. To this day I suffer from these problems which the medical profession can do nothing for me.

A short time ago, my son who resides on his farm in Tomslake was gassed by H₂S in his own home. This included his wife and their little pet dog. They all had their lungs burned and their health is very bad from this, including the little Pug dog. My son and daughter-in-law were very healthy people. Never been hospitalized in their lives, now they suffer from severe respiratory conditions. Most people in this area and in particular the children and elderly are on inhalers or other medications for breathing and lung problems.

Regarding the gas well blow out by Pouce Coupe. There is at least one person with severely burned lungs and several animals killed. Encana was not even aware of the problem for several hours after the blow-out. They were notified by the residents -- when the residents were finally able to contact someone from Encana.

Since the drilling companies have moved in a good deal of the land is no good for farming or ranching, the water is not fit to use, if there is any water left where there used to be plenty. The South Dawson Creek which used run across my land is now dry. I have water rights on a dry creek! My son's farm in Tomslake had a huge “dug-out” with wonderful water which they cannot now use. He has had to install an underground tank and have water hauled from town. This has been a huge expense to him. The water in the dug-out is so contaminated with gas and other toxins from the drilling. One of my other sons who lives several kilometers west of me has a small acreage where he and another of my sons live. They fought a company for nine months and finally won. The company wanted to run a road across the property which would have gone right through the wetland which feeds the water source of themselves and two other residents. This would have ruined the water source of these three and possibly more residents. These companies have no consideration for anyone.

Then we come to the bombing of the pipelines and the RCMP. In the words of a friend who was in Germany during WW2 “Even the Gestapo were not this bad!” I can only give you examples of myself and very few others as people here are too afraid to talk.

I was personally questioned for three hours. The officers had a file on me at least a half inch thick which included all of my e-mails. (They may gather this one as well) The reason I was pin-pointed as a person of interest was because I dared to speak out against the industry. My sons were also involved in their investigation. My son in Tomslake had a visit from two officers who separated him from his wife and questioned them for several hours. They returned at a later date and demanded their handwriting, fingerprints and DNA. They gave the officers their handwriting and that was all. The officers were somewhat upset, to say the least!! I have refused unless they come after me with a warrant.

Many people have been taken to the police station and questioned and held for several hours with no charges. The officers have gone to people's workplaces questioning employers about their employees. Phones are being tapped. People are being pulled over on the highway when they are just going to work or the neighbour's place. Vehicles are searched and people questioned. Residents are afraid to leave their homes or yards and even then “Security” will sit outside of homes on the road and glass the home to see what the persons there are doing. (I have had this happen to me as well.)

In the case of Mr. Ludwig, I have yet to meet one person here who believes that he is the “bomber”. The police are just grabbing at straws. Every one here is sure that it is an “inside job”. Just another way to keep the residents under the thumb of the industry.

I wish I had more information from individuals to forward to you but folks are just so afraid of the RCMP and the industry. I had to really chuckle as I was watching the Global news from Vancouver yesterday. Some poor fellow was having a fit over having to listen to and smell the diesel generators by the different Olympic venues. The poor fellow could not get any sleep! Well, how would he like that twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week 365 days a year and add to it constant heavy diesel traffic and the resulting dust and fumes. I know people who have ended up in hospital from stress and sleep deprivation and had to be given heavy sedation. There are so many stories out there that I have only touched on so little of it here. I will try to talk more individuals into giving me more information but it is not easy.

I will forward more info as I can get it.

Yours from the once Mighty Peace.

BAN HYDRO-FRACTURING AND HORIZONTAL DRILLING OF NATURAL GAS

Gas that's now being unconventionally extracted isn't lying there underground in big natural pools near the earth's surface, and it's not easy to collect. The days of getting natural gas the way it was done back in the 19th century are over. Easily gotten old conventional supplies of gas have been declining since 1973. That's why Halliburton developed a deep, high pressure, multiply horizontally bored and hydrofractured drilling process. It uses extreme measures to release remnants of gas, which while pervasive are locked very tightly within the actual matrix of dense stone deposits, such

as shales. The Halliburton process essentially — rather like alchemy — converts stone into gas. But that’s not all it does. Those unconventional natural gas drilling sites are hazardous waste production facilities.

Old conventional gas wells were not much different than water wells. They were simply vertical holes drilled not very deeply into the earth to tap into reservoirs of gas within cavities, or flowing through a relatively porous and permeable subsurface material. Some limited hydrofracture stimulation was done in the past to increase production in conventional gas wells. But compared with current techniques, those old wells used negligible quantities of chemicals, small quantities of water, and much less pressure.

Unconventional shale gas drilling is something totally different. The vertical holes are drilled far deeper. The bits are then turned to bore multiple horizontal holes over great distances. A large number of hazardous chemicals are combined with enormous quantities of good fresh water. That “slick water” mixture is used to flood the drilled holes. By means of huge diesel fuel burning air compressors, it’s then pressurized up to 8,000 psi. That converts as much as a thousand times more water than traditionally used into toxic waste; while using 2 to 4 times greater pressure than any fracking done in old conventional wells. Far higher volumes of toxic fluids, and much higher pressure is used to make those fluids behave as powerful explosives to shatter stone formations that lie beneath water supplies. Those are important factors regarding the potential for unconventional drilling to contaminate water supplies, which it too often has done.

While the post-peak conventional gas production has been in continuous decline, energy companies have ramped up their hydrofractured horizontal drilling in western states. Use of the Halliburton process has increased by more than 300% from 1990 through 2008. The gas industry has already Iraq-ified much of the western states. While it continues to expand extraction there, it is also now invading and occupying the more populated east. It’s moving up the Marcellus Shale Play, from West Virginia (the extraction industry friendly home of mountaintop removal), through Pennsylvania, and coming into Ohio and New York. The scale of the environmental assault is rapidly increasing. The cumulative effect of what would eventually be hundreds of thousands of hazardous waste producing natural gas well sites must be considered.

In western states where it has been used for decades, the atrocious environmental impacts of the Halliburton process have become clearly evident in air, ground and water contamination.

Drillers and government regulatory agencies facilitating the surge in use of the Halliburton drilling process claim that chemicals are used in insignificant quantities. They say various combinations of the many chemicals used for numerous purposes only amount to a total of about 1% of the “slick water” hydrofracking fluids used. But, while an old style conventional gas well drilling would use a few thousand gallons of water, and little to no chemicals; by contrast, an unconventional deep horizontal shale gas well uses (dependent upon various factors) between 2 and 9 million gallons of fresh water. Only 1% of the “slick water” fluid volumes being chemicals may seem insignificant, but it is 1% of truly enormous volumes. 1% of the 2 to 9 million gallons of water used per well becomes between 20,000 to 90,000 gallons of chemicals used for each well site. And all the millions of gallons of fresh water, being the 99% ingredient in “slick water” used per well in the Halliburton process, is converted into toxic waste by the 1% of “proprietary secret” chemicals added. Then that toxic “slick water” recipe is mixed in with a lot of very nasty stuff that lies down there deep within the earth, which the hydrofracturing releases from the stone along with the gas. That nasty natural stuff like benzene, toluene, ethyl benzene, and xylene; radioactive materials;

hydrogen sulfide; arsenic and mercury is pumped up out of the drill holes as so called “produced water” (highly hazardous liquid/solid waste). Those contaminants are dumped into open evaporation pools used to reduce the volume of hazardous waste to be inconveniently and expensively disposed of somewhere else, other than in the air. Gas men filter into communities in advance of drilling to privately proffer lease agreements. Signing landowners get up front bonus money and promises of great riches to come from future gas production royalties. That incites a feverish greed, particularly in economically depressed areas. The possible lessors and local officials are blinded to the negative environmental and societal impacts which will accompany that money. People who warn of hazards are labelled “extremists” for being cautious.

Bright and cheerfully optimistic TV advertisements assure viewers that gas corporations are going to bring about a wonderful energy independence for America, by using new technologies providing amazing quantities of domestic “green” energy production. They don’t mention the invasive scale of the number of well sites that will be required to achieve that; nor their expropriation from the Commons of enormous quantities of fresh water, which water is more valuable than the gas it will be squandered to get; nor the staggering amount of hazardous waste that their “new technology” produces.