

**Media Alert
March 19, 2008
Rosebud, Alberta**

8 Landowners Reject Closure of Groundwater Cases: Demand Proper Study of Industrial Contamination

Eight landowners sent letters to the government today rejecting a decision by Alberta Environment to close or complete its groundwater investigation of about 15 contaminated water wells in central Alberta.

The landowners suspect their wells have been polluted with hydrocarbons or other contaminants from petroleum industry activities or facilities, older or poorly sealed hydrocarbon wells and or shallow coal bed methane drilling.

In separate letters that were mailed or delivered, Alberta Environment informed landowners that the government closed or completed its groundwater investigations on these cases and will stop delivering water to three landowners.

Alberta Environment wrote that their investigation of the Campbell well was complete even though the Alberta Research Council (ARC) confirmed contamination from a deep source and recommended further investigation.

Alberta Environment closed the Herle case despite data collected by industry indicating toxic contamination that exceeded Canadian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines.

Alberta Environment closed the Rosebud cases based on reviews by ARC that found that energy developments have “most likely not adversely affected the complainant water wells.”

ARC’s 2007 annual report clearly lists EnCana as a funder of its water program including studies on the impacts of coalbed methane development. (p.14)

In a January 28th letter to MLA David Swann, Karlis Muelenbachs and Barbara Tilley at the University of Alberta, two experts on fingerprinting the sources of gas contamination, criticized the ARC study as inadequate and called the government's conclusion “premature.”

“By closing these cases Alberta Environment has failed to protect groundwater let alone monitor groundwater quality as mandated under the Water Act,” says Jessica Ernst, an environmental scientist and landowner in Rosebud, Alberta.

Other landowners accuse Alberta Environment of neglect and incompetence:

Tim Herle (businessman): "The way that Alberta Environment is testing our water is not benefiting Albertans or our environment. The only persons benefiting from this is industry."

Debbie Singer (businesswoman): “I reject the closure of my case by Alberta Environment because of inadequacies, omissions and inaccuracies in the ARC report.”

Peter and Fiona Lauridsen (farmers): “All data from all gas wells in every area

reviewed by the ARC must be made publicly available."

Ronalie and Shawn Campbell (ranchers): "The more dangerous oversight was the presence of sour gas in our water from test results in 2006 and 2007. The levels are several hundred times higher than the acceptable level for constant exposure to sour gas....We are appalled that the ARC and Alberta Environment did not pick up on this."

All eight landowners demand that Alberta Environment submit the ARC reports and all data collected by industry and Alberta Environment to a full peer review by independent scientists agreed upon by the complainants.

Alberta Environment and the Energy Resources Conservation Board share responsibility for groundwater protection. The ARC study noted that Alberta Environment "does not have a specific and documented response process" and that data gathering and evaluation decisions "are made somewhat subjectively."

In contrast the Texas Railroad Commission, that state's oil and gas regulator, annually reports cases to the Texas Groundwater Protection Committee. In 2006 the Commission recorded 351 cases of groundwater contamination due to oil and gas activity in 110 counties.

http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/assets/public/comm_exec/pubs/sfr/groundwater06/06-1.pdf

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