

The Daily Review

Sugar Run woman sues Chesapeake over gas drilling

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Review Photo/C.J. Marshall Judy Armstrong and Carl Siles stand next to a blow hole near their residence in Sugar Run.

A Sugar Run woman has filed a civil action against Chesapeake Energy and one of its subsidiaries, seeking damages due to health problems she claims she has experienced because of natural gas drilling operations in the area.

According to papers filed at the Bradford County Courthouse on Wednesday, Judy Armstrong, of 479 Quicksbend Road, has initiated a lawsuit against Chesapeake and Nomac Drilling, claiming that contamination from area gas drilling operations owned by Chesapeake have polluted the well water that serves her residence. Armstrong is contending in the complaint that she suffered a number of illnesses and health problems because of this, requiring her to seek medical treatment.

In a press conference held Thursday at her residence, Armstrong explained that she moved to her present address in November 2009. Since then, Armstrong said, she's experienced headaches, confusion, dizziness, nausea and skin rashes as well as pain in her joints. There are times, she said, when she feels a burning sensation when the water gets into a cut or in her eyes.

Other problems Armstrong said she's experienced since moving to her current address include back and abdomen pains. She said she was incapacitated during the summer months because the pain was so bad, and eventually had to be treated at both Memorial Hospital in Towanda and Robert Packer Hospital in Sayre.

Armstrong's fiance, Carl Siles, who lives with Armstrong and owns the house and property where they live, explained that representatives from Chesapeake and the Department of Environmental Protection tested their water in September and was informed by them that it tested positive for methane. After the tests occurred, Siles said, they started receiving bottled water for drinking via a delivery service. Siles said he cannot confirm if Chesapeake is paying for the water. Siles also said he contacted Chesapeake to see if the company would supply additional water to the residence for bathing and other purposes. However, Siles said, representatives from Chesapeake informed him that the test results for the well water at the house is not past DEP's limits, so the company would not supply water for the residence.

Siles is not a plaintiff in the lawsuit filed against Chesapeake by Armstrong.

According to information in the lawsuit, Armstrong is contending that Chesapeake and Nomac were negligent in the drilling and operation of several local natural gas wells because: "Methane, ethane, and other pollutants industrial and/or residual waste, was caused to be discharged into or otherwise enter and contaminate the

ground and aquifer near and under the plaintiff's (Armstrong's) home and into the ground water well used and relied upon as her water supply."

The lawsuit indicated that Armstrong is seeking damages from Chesapeake to pay for the medical expenses she has incurred because of her illnesses. Armstrong is also seeking remuneration from Chesapeake to pay any future medical expenses for any additional treatments she needs from the problems she has been experiencing. The suit also seeks an injunction against Chesapeake to prevent any future natural gas drilling operations in the immediate area, as well as punitive damages from Chesapeake and Nomac for "fraudulent misrepresentation and gross negligence."

Court documents indicated that Armstrong is being represented in the case by the law offices of Dr. Michael Gleeson of Archbald, Pa.; Parker Waichman Alonso of Port Washington, N.Y.; **Neblett, Beard and Arsenault of Alexandria, La.**; and Becnel Law Firm of Reserve, La.

When contacted about the situation, Brian Grove, senior director for Corporate Development at Chesapeake, responded via e-mail: "We have not seen the suit and, thus, cannot comment on its claims."

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