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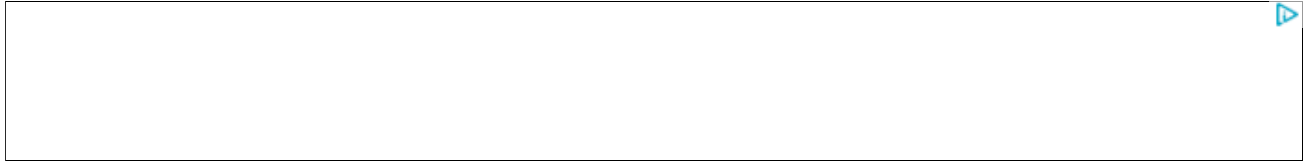
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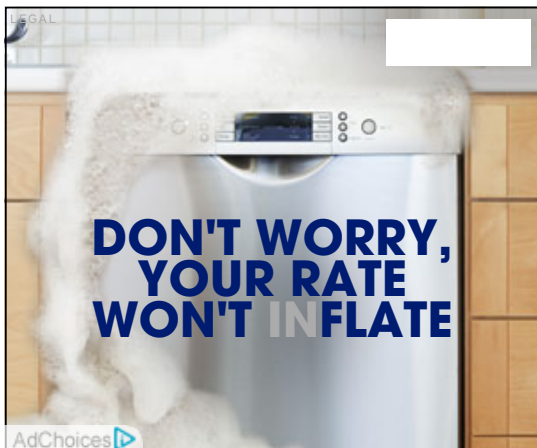
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Gas driller cited for violation after environmentalist takes photos





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BY STEVE MCCONNELL (STAFF WRITER) / PUBLISHED: DECEMBER 31, 2009

A state investigation sparked by a local environmentalist who rented an airplane to gather photographic evidence has revealed an unreported contaminate release at a natural gas drilling site in Wayne County.

A preliminary investigation of the Oregon Twp. well pad, operated by Chesapeake Appalachia, found in October that a "weathered petroleum product" of unknown quantity was discharged onto the site and

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The Times-Tribune

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into a forested area, in breach of state environmental laws, according to the notice of violation issued by the state Department of Environmental Protection.

The drilling firm reported no incidents, and DEP had been unaware of any problem. But Pat Carullo, a photographer and co-founder of Damascus Citizens for Sustainability, a Wayne and Pike county environmental watchdog organization, said he knew something was not quite right.

Mr. Carullo said he took aerial photographs in late August and September showing a direct line of leafless trees extending away from the well pad.

"It was completely obvious by the photographic evidence," he said.

Jeff Zimmerman, a Washington, D.C.-based environmental attorney retained by the watchdog organization, filed a formal, nine-page complaint with the state environmental

photo submitted by pat carullo An aerial photo taken Sept. 24 shows a line of leafless, dead and dying trees extending away from a Chesapeake Appalachia drill pad in Oregon Twp., Wayne County. A state investigation found that a "weathered petroleum product" was discharged at the site, in breach of environmental laws.



An aerial photo taken Aug. 30 shows dead and dying trees, allegedly caused by contaminated runoff along a drainage rut from the natural gas drilling site in Wayne County. (Photo by Pat Carullo)

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Chris Kelly Blog: Lock him up! Lock him up! Lock him...

At best, Michael Flynn is a bad liar. At worst, he's a traitor. (read more)

Wechsler, Rogan announce council re-election bids

Two more incumbent Democratic city councilmen announced they will seek re-election, saying their first-term work contributed to the city's financial

regulator in early October that included the photographs. It urged the regulator to investigate "whether contaminants have been released from this site."

DEP began its investigation, which included basic soil sampling, within weeks after receiving the complaint, said department spokesman Daniel Spadoni.

"The tests were done months after the spill because some concerned citizens took it upon themselves," Mr. Carullo said. "If we must, we will."

DEP issued the violation notice to Chesapeake Appalachia on Nov. 9. The West Virginia-based company is the second-largest natural gas leaseholder in Wayne County, according to county records.

A Chesapeake Appalachia executive denied that its operation affected the environment.

The company has "not been able to identify any operational deficiencies," said Brian



BOB SANCHUK / STAFF ARTIST



- Read the DEP notice of violation (.pdf)
- Read the Chesapeake letter (.pdf)

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recovery. (read more)



Son of former Penn State assistant coach Jerry Sandusky arrested on child sex charges

BELLEFONTE — One of Jerry Sandusky's adult sons faces multiple charges of sexual offenses involving children, more than five years after the former Penn

Grove, director of corporate development, in an e-mailed statement.

"We are working with the PA Department of Environmental Protection to conduct some follow-up tests, as well as consulting with appropriate experts to review the data and provide an independent analysis," he said.

How petroleum was discharged into the environment is not detailed in the notice, just that it what was "possibly transmission oil or pump oil." Mr. Spadoni said he did not "have specific information."

Petroleum, as defined by the regulator, can include leaded and unleaded gasoline, kerosene, fuel oil, diesel fuel, lubricating oils and fluids.

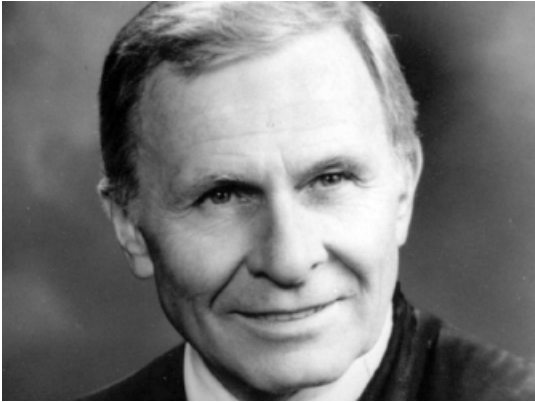
Soil sampling

Mr. Spadoni said it is not yet clear whether the discharge of petroleum was responsible for defoliating the trees. The department and Chesapeake Appalachia's environmental contractors continue to test soil and water in that specific area and around the site.

"We ... will have a better idea once the latest sampling is completed," he said. "When all of the soil sample results come back, we will meet with Chesapeake Appalachia to discuss those results and where we need to go from there."

- DEP fines Chesapeake Appalachia, Schlumberger for acid spill in Bradford County
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After more than 30 years on the bench, senior U.S. District Judge Edwin M. Kosik will no longer hear cases because of health issues. (read more)

Historical Architecture Review Board OKs firehouse facade fix

The city's Historical Architecture Review Board unanimously approved an application Monday night from

However, an e-mail from a Chesapeake employee to state regulators, obtained by The Times-Tribune, discloses some early results of that testing. Preliminary testing by Chesapeake's environmental contractors showed elevated concentrations of barium and chloride, among other substances associated with drilling, in several soil samples. A surface water sample taken by Chesapeake employees showed elevated levels of salts and barium, with the barium on the cusp of the federal drinking water standard. Barium can be harmful to human health, and a form of it is used during the drilling process.

The e-mail was sent by Chesapeake employee Rachelle King on Nov. 18 to state DEP employees. The e-mail also discusses that the company hired an arborist to examine the leafless trees, and that a "fluvial pathway" - fluid path - clearly runs from one corner of the well pad into the leafless tree area.

"Personnel observed a corridor of trees, along a fluvial pathway, which experienced leaf loss," according to the e-mail.

It concludes that the company's soil analysis should be completed by mid-January.


Questions remain

According to state records obtained by The Times-Tribune, the soil samples taken Oct. 15 that triggered the notice of violation did not test for the full range of chemicals associated with natural gas drilling, leaving some questions as to extent of the contamination.



Scranton officials to reconstruct a leaning decorative parapet atop the Fire Department's Mulberry Street headquarters. (read more)



 Windy weather doesn't spoil a good walk

Monday was hardly the coldest day of the winter, but the wind did its best to make it feel that way — as evidenced by

"The Department's October 15th soil samples did indicate the presence of weathered petroleum product," wrote a department geologist in an e-mail to colleagues and a Chesapeake official on Nov. 3.

The geologist, Eric M. Rooney, added that "because of the uncertainty of what was released, the laboratory analysis should include the full suite of volatiles, semi-volatiles, chloride and metals" used during the natural gas-drilling process.

"An evaluation should be conducted to determine what other substances may have been released," he wrote.

The department records suggest some evidence for what else might have contaminated the site.

In a department summary of a Nov. 18 conference call with Chesapeake representatives, DEP staff again stressed the need to test for total metals "because of the potential drilling mud was released."

Drilling mud is used to lubricate the drill bit, lift cuttings from the hole and keep fluids in the rock formations from entering the well bore during drilling.

In a Nov. 5 site visit report, Mr. Rooney noted that "soil samples collected by Chesapeake Energy indicated the presence of chloride, sodium and calcium that may indicate that drilling wastewater was released."

Mr. Spadoni said this week that determining exactly what was released "will be one of the primary objectives of the latest soil sampling." He said he did not know when this

these pedestrians in downtown Scranton. (read more)



Penn State scholarship roster breakdown: Special teams

This is another area where the Nittany Lions weren't very good for a few years before James Franklin and his staff kind of worked the team into a very palatable situation for the future. (read more)

Predicting the 2017 RailRiders Opening Day Roster: Starting Pitchers

It's hard to believe but New York Yankees pitchers and catchers arrive at George M. Steinbrenner Field in Tampa,

would be completed.

Mr. Zimmerman, the environmental group's attorney, said the final sample results will be critical to determining the depth of the environmental impact.

"If it was a weathered petroleum product as they say, my presumption is there must have been quite a lot," he said. "Seems to me the only way the trees could die is that some toxic material was taken up through the roots."

Mr. Grove, of Chesapeake, said the company will work "proactively" to fully and accurately account the facts of this matter and take appropriate action, if needed."

The Oregon Twp. site is the company's first and only natural gas well drilled in Wayne County thus far. According to Mr. Grove, it was a vertically drilled, "exploratory well" targeting a shale formation beneath the Marcellus Shale. Drilling began May 23.

"The story is far from over," Mr. Carullo said.

LAURA LEGERE, staff writer, contributed to this report.

Contact the writer: smconnell@timeshamrock.com



Florida, for spring training today. (read more)



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This Week's Circulares

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If I were against fossil fuels as much as some of the posters here, I would turn off my heater and electricity, and quit driving. I have seen demonstrations of the drilling and fracing process and it looks to be very sound. PA needs jobs and the US needs home grown energy sources. I really think the naysayers here are living in a fantasy world. When I go off grid, the first thing I have to have ready is a source of warmth and fresh water. If I use a battery for power I calculate amp/hrs so I have some basic comforts and only need a generator when absolutely necessary. I am not a big garbage producer and I reluctantly throw away old products. In other words , I am familiar with living without conveniences at times, I appreciate getting out in nature, and I am careful about being excessive. With that said, I need to burn fossil fuels to live and I can't imagine you can live without them either. How do you propose to live without fossil fuels for the foreseeable future? Windmills , solar ,and bio-fuels have their place but they are only commercially feasible when subsidized and you must realize our country is broke and living on borrowed money.

Report

Ron, 4 January 2010 kl. 00:02

Find another way. After 24 months of research I am convinced this is not the answer. Too bad. It did sound too good to be true. Hey, the Beverly Hillbillies were always pining for their old life anyway. LOOK AT THIS!! <http://domesticfuel.com/2009/12/06/sunbelt-biofuels-to-license-freedom-giant-miscanthus/> Here's a quote- . "This non genetically modified feedstock grows well in the Southeast, takes less land, costs less to grow and will provide solid revenue for growers. Studies have shown that the feedstock will produce over 3,000 gallons of ethanol per acre. On average, one acre of corn produces around 450 gallons of ethanol."

This is Stephen Chu's baby. (ENERGY SECRETARY) There are successful test plots going on all over

the country, even some in Wayne County.

From Wiki- The resulting CO2 emissions are equal to the amount of CO2 that the plant used up from the atmosphere during its growing phase, and thus the process is greenhouse gas-neutral, if one does not consider any fossil fuels that might have been used in planting, fertilizing, or harvesting the crop, or in transporting the biofuel to the point of use.

Let's invent our way out of this mess we're in, not make a whole new set of problems!

GASLAND by Josh FOX is going to SUNDANCE!!!!

Report

Jane Cyphers DCS, 2 January 2010 kl. 22:23

Has anyone noticed that Scranton MSA the highest unemployment in the state? When the Wurtz brothers dug their ditch it carried Wayne County to seventy years of prosperity. Let us keep every chance at economic progress out. Maybe we can give some property back to the Lenni Lenape to atone for sins visited on the aborigines.

Report

Carlton Perry, 1 January 2010 kl. 23:24

REVIEWING THIS MATERIAL IT SEEMS CLEAR TO ME THAT WE NEED REGULATIONS THAT ARE STRICTLY ENFORCED WITH TOUGH PENALTIES.

WE NEED ENERGY SOURCES BUT THAT WON'T DO US MUCH GOOD IF THE ENVIROMENT IS DESTROYED AND OUR FAMLIES ARE POISONED IN THE PROCESS.

Report

THOMAS PAINE CRONIN, 1 January 2010 kl. 17:59

I wonder how long it takes a tree to die by sucking up some poison from the underground? And then what happens to all that wood?

How do you get rid of poison wood? If you saw them down. The wood chips can posion more thing's around the area. And leach into your well maybe?

I think they will have to be dug up and then the ground under the trees tested again.

And disposal of the trees, must be documented. Or it will end up at a saw mill made into boards that you buy to build toys for children. Or cutting boards for your kitchen.

On another note I was wondering why "they" (the gas Co's.) are paying people in Texas \$25,000 per acre. And here they are offering \$5750. per acre. I guess the people here are really? What is that word? Maybe not doing your homework suckers. I have this bridge I want to sell you.

Report

a new york minute, 1 January 2010 kl. 11:45

My friends, it is time to rise up against what's going on here. We are not powerless. These comments are certainly read by some, but when you get in some elected leader's face, or get out on a street corner and challenge those pushing for drilling or looking the other way like most of our "leaders" are doing...it's far more effective.

Report

Don Williams, 1 January 2010 kl. 06:34

I agree with Ron. We should develop our natural resources. We need reliable energy to sustain our standard of living. However, the drilling companies need to protect the environment. There must be a balance.

Also, it would help if everyone would be less wasteful in their daily lives. Simple things like turning out lights when you don't need them, not using clothes dryers, driving less. Conservation helps.

Report

Joe Martin, 1 January 2010 kl. 03:38

What kind of energy do environmentalists LIKE, exactly? It seems hydro is too land intensive, coal emits really scary stuff like carbon - the element of life, nuclear is just an accident waiting to happen (we've been waiting fifty years so far), and wind energy, as any person with half a brain will tell you, isn't worth a crap, is too sprawling and kills 5 to 20 avians per year per tower (not bad until you consider Obama's plan requires nearly a half million wind machines).

Report

TStacy, 1 January 2010 kl. 01:22

THANK YOU SO MUCH!!!!!! STOP DRILLERS THEY ARE KILLING PA!!

Report

TREELOVER, 31 December 2009 kl. 19:41

Ron, The trade off won't be worth it if there's a huge drill rig next door to you that destroying your health and your peace. They are loud and messy and if the recent Times article is accurate, they are run by guys with drug and alcohol issues. You should go check out one of the Dimock drilling pads if you haven't already. It will scare the heck out of you. New York is investigating the environmental impact of gas drilling. Why aren't we? Because we're greedy and stupid.

Report

I don't want to die from drinking poisoned well water, 31 December 2009 kl. 17:50

You would think we'd learn. The environmental scars from the exploitation of our area by coal companies are still evident decades later. I hope the landowners who sold away their mineral rights realize the long term environmental damage they are allowing right in their back yards. It's a shame.

Report

Observer, 31 December 2009 kl. 17:10

If the problem comes from a discharge of a harmful chemical than it should be proven. However if you want to heat your home, drive a car, have abundant fresh foods , ambulances to take you to hospitals, in short, our modern way of life, there will be some forms of pollution. Try camping in the winter without a fire and see if you like living without fossil fuels. Solar and wind can supplement local natural gas and coal to give us abundant , reasonably priced US energy. If you don't like it , no one makes you drive , use electricity or heat/air condition your home. The trade off is worth it to me.

Report

Ron, 31 December 2009 kl. 16:20

this was any extremely wet year for trees in susquehanna county many trees just dried up early and leaves on some fell extreamely early making some parts look dead.to much rain rot.lets not jump on gas drillers for any little human error it happens in buissness evry day . lets rember why they are here getting us off overseas oil - and craeting green jobs. you enviromentlest should be ashammed of your selves our boys overseas fighting oil wars about time we start to end our dependecy on foreign oil.

Report

jim, 31 December 2009 kl. 15:39

This sort of contamination has been taking place throughout the US where gas drilling is allowed. Check out drilling in Colorado, Wyoming, New Mexico, Texas, Ohio. People are becoming ill, water is being contaminated, extreme amounts of toxins are in the air and there is mounting evidence linking gas drilling to these problems. Contact the politicians. Insist they regulate the industry. You put them into office and you could take them out!

Report

Linda Nealon, 31 December 2009 kl. 15:30

We should all be protective of the enviroment and hold everybody accountable for polluting our water, air, and land. At the same time remember that we need base line energy and that isn't windmills,and solar, but natural gas, oil, coal and nuclear. Our population centers without energy enough to keep people employed,and have safe food supplies and heat and cooling is a recipe for a total breakdown and war in the streets. Millions would be affected and that road is not a chance we should take.

We have fougth enough wars over oil and should thank our blessings for having this major resource below our feet. Just do it with our future in mind and take care of it.

Report

Rick Mercer, 31 December 2009 kl. 14:16

See Joey-boy, this is how a real activist operates. Identify a problem and offer clear proof rather than bizarre allegations and rumors to back it up. That's how the sucessful ones get results. No crazy websites or lawsuit chasing lawsuit. Just ask your buddy down the road who tried tackling a

supposed environmental issue with made up evidence. Haven't heard much from him since the apology have you?

Report

Darren, 31 December 2009 kl. 13:54

We ALL need to begin dunning our government officials with phone calls, e-mails and/or letters demanding that this insanity be stopped. That, and come election time, elect people who actually care about the health and safety of the people and land they represent. New York, while I'm sure not perfect regarding protecting our environment, has at least ceased all drilling until they get a better handle on the outcome of it. This whole area is going to be ruined and uninhabitable. Those on public water supplies, don't be fooled, your water can just as easily be polluted.

Report

Gas - Not So Clean Energy, 31 December 2009 kl. 12:52

Let's just be thankful that we have people willing to investigate and report on this type of misconduct! Thank you Steve for reporting this to the community!

Report

Stan, 31 December 2009 kl. 12:08

Good to see someone is investigating since the newspapers and the state apparently refuse to do so. My wife asks why we must study history. This is why. This area was already raped once by coal companies. Had we learned our lesson we wouldn't have allowed these companies to come in and invade our area.

Report

Otter, 31 December 2009 kl. 12:06

yikes

Report

yikes, 31 December 2009 kl. 11:50

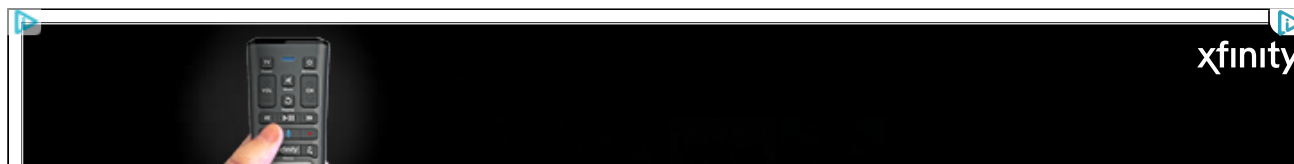
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