

## Ron Gulla Washington County, PA

Not even six years of work in the oil and gas industry could have prepared Ron Gulla of Hickory, PA for what was about to happen to him and his neighbors. In 2002, landowners around Mt. Pleasant Township were approached by a third party agent offering them payments and royalties for permitting the extraction of natural gas from beneath their land. People in western Pennsylvania had some experience with gas extraction using traditional vertical wells, but few had heard of hydraulic fracturing. Range Resources did not warn them about what was at stake.

In 2005, Mr. Gulla said, “the fossil fuel industry received an almost unbelievable gift from the federal government, courtesy of then Vice President Dick Cheney,” a former Halliburton CEO. Halliburton is deeply involved in developing high-volume slickwater hydraulic fracturing technology. Cheney’s national energy policy, negotiated largely behind closed doors with industry representatives, exempted oil and gas companies from key clauses of the Clean Water Act and from numerous other laws enacted to protect our drinking water, air and soil. This removed the Environmental Protection Agency from any effective oversight role, and gave the industry “free reign to pollute at will, anywhere, anytime,” said Mr. Gulla. Horizontal drilling in Mt. Pleasant Township began that year.

By February 2006, Gulla’s property had become a waste dump for an endless stream of mud, mill slag, silt and toxic back-flow from the fracking wells. Land eroded and sediment formed on the bottom of Gulla’s 2.5 acre pond. By July, all the vegetation around the pond was dead. When Gulla asked Range Resources if they had tested the pond water, their response was that since they never conducted a pre-drilling test they had no baseline for comparison.

Appeals to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection produced no results. DEP workers came, saw, shook their heads and left—in one case to work for Range Resources.

In September 2006, the pond water was sampled by a DEP employee. In January 2007, Gulla received a letter stating that the contamination did not result from drilling practices. ***In May, the fish died. In August, Gulla noticed fluid running out of the unplugged end of the flow pipe of one of the 15 fracking tanks on his land, directly into the soil and a nearby stream.*** Calls to the DEP were not answered, Mr. Gulla said.

Gulla eventually had no choice but to sell his contaminated land to Range Resources, holding out for a price sufficient to purchase and move to what he thought was a comparable property, shown to him by a local realtor. After the sale of the old property, the deal for the new one fell through when Gulla discovered that he had been lied to again. A significant portion of the property, which the realtor led him to believe was unencumbered, was in fact subject to a mineral extraction lease. The realtor turned out to have ties to the company.