

## Tim and Christine Ruggiero Wise County, TX

Dreaming for themselves and their daughter, Reilly, of a peaceful country life surrounded by animals and nature, Tim and Christine Ruggiero purchased 10 acres and a home in Wise County, TX in 2004. In August of 2009, “[Aruba Petroleum] turned our dream into a nightmare,” said Christine.

***Tests of the Ruggieros’ drinking water show that before drilling the water was pure, but post-drilling it is laced with strontium, boron and a chemical resembling methyl tertiary-butyl ether, a gasoline additive.***

The Ruggieros soon learned that their 10 acres were part of the 920 acre Wright lease held by Aruba, giving the company permission to extract gas from the Barnett Shale that lay beneath the Ruggieros’ soil.

Their neighbor’s front yard was the first impacted – it was bulldozed to make way for a well pad located directly above the pond where their grandsons liked to swim and fish. The Ruggieros complained to the company and placed protest signs on their property.

On September 16, 2009, alerted by a call from a neighbor, Christine raced home from work to discover that workers had cut her \$15,000 pipe and cable fence, let her horses loose and moved in trucks and heavy equipment. Attempts to talk with company representatives on the scene or later proved futile.

The company began drilling two natural gas wells within 300 feet of the Ruggieros back door, and pressuring the Ruggieros to sign a surface use agreement that paid them \$15,000 per well. Aruba representatives made it clear that with or without an agreement, the drilling would proceed. Seeing no other choice, the Ruggieros reluctantly signed. Half of the money has already been spent on environmental testing and fighting for their rights. Their property, once appraised for as much as \$340,000, is now unsellable at any price.

By October, the Ruggieros’ former paddock housed Aruba Petroleum's rig, heavy machinery, camper trailers, semi trucks and dozens of workmen, satellite dishes and even a barbecue pit. A sound barrier did little to reduce the racket of a diesel generator that ran night and day, pouring exhaust into their air.

The site is plagued by spills. Thousands of gallons of drilling mud discharged when a jet was left unattended. A frac tank valve was not shut properly and leaked all night, saturating the ground around it. The tank was then moved even closer, to within 300 feet of their house, and continued to leak. Another tank overflowed and gushed out condensate for more than twelve

hours before it was shut down. In the level area about fifty feet from the wellheads, bright red fluid and bubbles seep up in the puddles after a rain.

The former horse pasture has been reseeded three times, but not even weeds will grow back. The Environmental Protection Agency has chosen this as one of their sites for a national study of hydraulic fracturing.

“Everything that we have worked so hard to build over the past six years was destroyed in a day with no regard for our property or health,” said Christine. But she was quick to add, “We are not defeated.” They continue to tell their story to “help others in similar situations, to prepare them for what they might face when Oil & Gas comes knocking at their door.”

The Ruggieros currently have a lawsuit pending against Aruba Petroleum.

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