

Last week, I was diagnosed with asthma due to my environment by a pulmonary specialist. I lived in the Town of Cooks Valley for the first 30 years of my life, lived in Bloomer for 17 years, and returned to live in Cooks Valley for the past 16 years. The development of sand mines has been the significant change in my environment. There are three mines in the Town of Cooks Valley: Buchner mine-1/2 mile northwest of my farm, LaGessee mine-1 mile north of my farm, and Schindler mine-2.5 miles southwest of my farm. The pulmonary specialist told me he can treat the symptoms but not the cause. He suggested I find out what chemicals they are using at the sand mines. I had asthmatic symptoms for five months before scheduling an appointment with my doctor. She then referred me to a pulmonary specialist. Between these two appointments, I visited Pennsylvania for a week and all the symptoms disappeared-no wheeze, no cough, no tightness in my chest, or swollen throat. After being home in Wisconsin for a week all these symptoms returned. Since I have lived in Cooks Valley most of my life and the only change has been the development of sand mines, I am convinced they are the cause of my asthma. I do not want to leave the farm that has been in my family for 76 years, but I worry that the asthma is just the beginning as silica sand is a known carcinogen that could lead to lung cancer. I worry about my family and neighbors, especially the young children. I worry about my beef cattle that breathe this air 24/7. So my health has now been compromised through no fault of my own. Sand companies and their supporters tell us sand mines are good for the economy, but money is a poor substitute for a person's health. People living near sand mines or on haul routes are exposed to this serious health situation daily. I don't know if I am the first person in the Town of Cooks Valley to develop health problems, but I do know I will not be the last.

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