

Public Comment at Public hearing for Chippewa Sands permit on October 16, 2013
By Victoria Trinko.

The gas and oil companies have had exemptions from the Clean Air and Water Act since 2005, due to the Halliburton Loophole legislated by Dick Cheney. Having protection from revealing the chemicals and hazards of this industry at the federal level, companies expect and demand limited oversight at the state and local level. State requirements are soulfully lacking in depth and requirements to control the hazards of this industry. This industry has since acted with impunity related to safety and health of employees and residents of communities where they extract sand or conduct hydraulic fracturing or 'fracking'.

Studies being conducted concerning the health hazards, the economic impact on communities, and water and air pollution contradict the claims of this industry. This industry hired the same public relations company to advertize the safety of silica sand and fracking that was retained by the tobacco industry to sell the notion to the public that smoking was not harmful. This public relations strategy indicates we are being sold a tainted bill of goods.

With those exemptions in mind, I would like to relate my experiences living next to the Chippewa Sands mine over the last two years.

On July 11, 2011, I commented on dust billowing from the Chippewa Sands mine site. We were told a water truck would be on site in the next week and a new road was being built.

On October 10, 2011, I again commented on the dust blowing off the sand mine site and was told the water truck came and then went to the neighboring town of New Auburn. I was often in my field that summer and fall and could feel dust clinging to my face and gritty particles in my teeth.

Also, at this time we were told the sand would only be washed with water, not chemicals.

In April of 2012, I developed an intermittent sore throat and raspy voice. April 2012 was also when the board and plan commission toured the Chippewa Sands mine site. The members of the board and plan commission observed slurry ponds and containers of chemicals being used to wash the sand and not just water as they had been previously told.

In September of 2012, I visited my Dr. who referred me to a pulmonary specialist. In October 2012, I was diagnosed with asthma due to my environment and started on an inhalant and nasal spray to alleviate my breathing symptoms.

In November of 2012, my daughter arrived home from Australia and said our home smelled like I had just swept the garage. She developed a cough, sore throat and a raspy voice within two weeks.

Early January of 2013, I purchased a heppa home air filter for \$1000.00, which runs 24/7 to keep the silica sand dust out of my home. I have not been able to open my windows since the fall of 2012 due the silica sand blowing through the air. I used to have the luxury of cooling my house by opening my windows at night. Since I can no longer do that, I use my air conditioner, which

brings in the outside air and silica dust. The air conditioner is now counterproductive; cooling my house while making it harder for the air filter to keep the air in my home clean to breathe.

On July 5, 2013, the wind blew out of the southeast and dust began rising out of the sand mine from all the mine site areas, creating an atmosphere so thick it obscured the bluff across the road from my home. Thankfully, when the wind is from the south I can be outside without symptoms occurring. When the wind is from the west, north or northwest, I need to wear a protective mask while outside for any length of time. Working near the road while the trucks are hauling sand and even with a south wind, I develop a sore throat and raspy voice.

While on a vacation for a month this summer, my symptoms lessened and disappeared so that the last days I did not take my medication. While driving home from Eau Claire after my trip, within a mile of the Howard sand mine, my throat started swelling, and by the time I arrived home, it was sore and my voice was hoarse.

On Sept 28, 2013, dust continued to blow off of the mine site, now a common occurrence. We have been told a water truck is on the premises of the Chippewa Sands mine site. It is probably on its first tank of gas.

This company has not dealt effectively or responsibly with the dust pollution since the inception of the mine.

In this permit application, there is no mention of the retention ponds, the amount of water used to fill the ponds, how they will dispose of the chemical-laced slurry, what plan of action will be taken in the event of a spill or the level of pollution in these ponds. I feel these ponds are highly toxic due to the signs posted next to the ponds and I don't think anyone has taken a dip in them as a relief from the heat.

The company also has had material slide into the crops of a neighboring field and constructed their ponds on an easement, which is not their property. These actions do not instill any amount of confidence in their company.

Given their conduct thus far, accepting their word on the conduction of their business in regard to other people's health, welfare and safety is extremely unwise. I feel this company has not demonstrated good intentions toward the safety of the community by their actions and the language in this permit.

The language in section 11.6 of this permit indicates Chippewa Sands resents restrictions on their industry and wishes to challenge any portion of the permit that would demand responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the Town of Cooks Valley.