

Residents fret over fluid used for dust control

By Derek Clouthier
The Eagle

A pair of residents who dwell north of Cochrane have voiced concern over how a section of road has been maintained by a Calgary energy company operating a hydraulic fracturing site in the area, more specifically, what is being used to treat the roadways.

Dan Thomas and Mike Ross have both expressed unease over what they have referred to as 'very dark, brown or black-looking stuff' being spread on Township Road 274 and Range Road 40 as a means of dust control.

Thomas, who is a member of the local coalition Cochrane Area Under Siege (CAUS), an organization that has voiced apprehension over the practice of 'fracking' in the region, said he approached one of the truck drivers last year who was spreading water on the road during a rainfall, and that the driver admitted that putting water on a gravel road while it was raining 'did not make any sense,' but that 'they' were making him do it.

Thomas said he did not know whom the driver meant by 'they', but that he later contacted Lightstream Resources (formerly Petro-Bakken Energy), the energy company operating in the area, to voice his displeasure over what he believed to be

an abundance of water on the road, but to no avail.

Fast forward a year, and Thomas said not only has the dumping continued, but also he is now unsure what kind of substance is being put on the roads.

"It appears the haulers were trying to confuse the residents by dumping well fluids under the guise of water-based dust control," Thomas claimed.

"It's a heck of a mess out here," echoed Ross, who owns an equestrian centre in the area. "The stuff coming out of the back of the truck is brown to black...it's not just water."

Chas Filipiski of Lightstream said that his company uses calcium to control dust on the roads around site 14-25, which is near Township Road 274 and Range Road 40.

"This is an approved procedure by the Rocky View (County) Roads department," said Filipiski. "It is part of our mandate under our road-use agreement with (the county) that we keep the roads maintained as we work."

Filipiski said they use calcium as a stabilizer for dust control as a courtesy to the county and its residents.

"It works and lasts longer than water," he said, "which we don't want to waste, as it allows us to use less water."

Filipiski also pointed out



Some residents north of Cochrane are not happy with how some of the roads are being maintained by energy companies working in the area, and what is being used in the name of dust control.

that Lightstream does have a permit from the county to use the roads in question, and that they are inspected by the county to make sure they are being properly preserved.

Rocky View County (RVC) concurred, indicating that Lightstream does possess a permit, and that the county has inspected both the roads.

"The county does inspect the roads regularly to ensure compliance," said Stacy McGuire, RVC communications coordinator, "and yes, we have inspected Township Road 274 and Range Road 40 and we have full compliance with the road-use agreement."

McGuire also pointed out that to control dust, the

county, and companies that sign the road-use agreement, use calcium chloride, which is like highly concentrated salt water.

"This is an environmentally friendly product," said McGuire, adding that molasses is used as a 'major ingredient.'

Thomas, however, believes that it is unlikely that molasses would be a primary ingredient in the liquid being used on the roads, and questions why the county or a company would use a product so high in salt content, as it would be quite corrosive on vehicles that utilize the road.

Thomas, who is a former energy sector employee, added that produced water from a well site would cer-

tainly be highly saline, but he questions whether using it on the roads is legal, saying it often has trace or significant amounts of hydrocarbon in it.

Hydrocarbon naturally occurs in crude oil and is an organic compound mixture of hydrogen and carbon.

Thomas said he believes that at this point, Lightstream is lying to area residents about what is being put on the roads near the company's 14-25 site, and that the black stuff being used came from the well.

"These guys will do anything to look 'green,'" said Thomas. "Ultimately, someone should test the material...that means the Alberta Sustainable Resource Development."

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