Chemicals in fracking

The fracking fluid, also called “slick water,” contains chemicals and sand. The chemicals facilitate the gas escape, but only industry insiders know what they are, or how much is being used. This is because the Clean Water Act of 1972 was amended in 2005 to exempt fracking companies from revealing that information. When people who live near fracking report that their drinking water is contaminated, they can test it for chemicals. But when the public is blocked from knowing what chemicals are used in fracking, it is hard to make a case that the frackers are responsible. This happens even when people and animals get sick and die. It is also true that some people have moved away and their symptoms have disappeared, yet frackers continue to withhold their information because government is allowing them to do so. Dr. Dawson Lim, an oncologist, says that “There are over 650 chemical compounds in fracking fluids that may cause cancer in humans. There is NO minimal exposure to these toxins that is safe.”5

If people and fracking companies reach a monetary settlement out of court, or they have allowed fracking on their land (but later regret it), they have to agree not to speak to the media about it. A Pennsylvania woman had multiple well pads around her home; her water started coming out of the tap with different colors on different days. When the water settled, there was a gel on top. She told her story in the publication “Shalefield Stories,” but she also said the gas company told her “I am not allowed to talk about this white water. I’ve never seen my water gel, and when I told the guy from Chesapeake that he paused, and he says, ‘How far down in the jar does it gel?’”6 Even doctors who treat people who live near fracking, and believe their water is contaminated, are under such “gag
orders” in Pennsylvania. This is true even though the same water making people sick is making livestock sick, and getting into the food supply via milk products. Complaints are many and include cancerous tumors, stomach pain, headaches, respiratory problems and many more. The collection “Shalefield Stories” provides abundant evidence from fracking areas in Pennsylvania, Colorado, West Virginia, Texas and Ohio.

5“Shalefield Stories,” published by Friends of the Harmed, 2014, p.4

6“Shalefield Stories,” p.6

7 Atlantic.com, 3/27/12, “For Pennsylvania’s Doctors, a Gag Rule on Fracking Chemicals.”