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Posted: 8:03 p.m. Wednesday, May 28, 2014

ENVIRONMENT

State: Can't tie water contamination to drilling

By Ramit Plushnick-Masti, Emily Schmall

Associated Press

HOUSTON — The amount of explosive gas tainting a North Texas neighborhood's water supply has increased in recent years, but the state's oil and gas regulator says it can't link the methane to drilling activity nearby, according to a report it released Wednesday.

The state Railroad Commission has found that the contamination has gotten worse in most of the private water wells it tested in September 2013 compared with what was measured in 2010 and in 2011. However, Peter Pope, the agency geologist who signed off on the report, wrote that the staff "has determined that the evidence is insufficient to conclude that Barnett Shale production activities have caused or contributed to methane contamination beneath the neighborhood."

The agency won't investigate further, Pope added in the report dated Friday. He suggested that infuriated residents of the subdivision in Weatherford, a suburb about 30 miles west of Fort Worth, "properly ventilate and aerate their water systems."

Methane isn't toxic, but can be explosive under certain conditions.

The agency's report contradicts findings by independent scientists who have done fingerprint-like analysis of the methane in the water wells and compared it to those being produced by a gas driller. Those scientists have said that the methane originates from a well that was once owned by Fort Worth-based Range Resources. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reached a similar conclusion in 2010 and took rare emergency action ordering Range to provide the homeowners with clean water.

Range Resources has repeatedly denied the allegation and said its testing doesn't link the methane in the water supply to the gases it produced.

"It's not at all surprising that yet another round of regulatory investigations have determined that gas is naturally present in the Trinity aquifer and is in no way associated with Range's operations," Range Resources spokesman Matt Pitzarella said in an email Wednesday.

But Rob Jackson, a Duke University professor who specializes in isotopic analysis and has conducted fingerprint testing on the water in the neighborhood, said he was surprised by the agency's decision not to do further testing.

"Based on their own data, five of eight water wells show increasing methane concentrations through time," Jackson said in an email.

The EPA, faced with lengthy and expensive litigation, eventually withdrew its order and settled with Range Resources. The company, under that agreement, was to conduct quarterly tests of the water wells.

The Railroad Commission said it compared its 2013 tests to those taken in 2010 and later by Range Resources. That is how it determined that the methane levels had increased, but, as it concluded in 2011, it found no link to the gases in the well that had been operated and previously owned by Range Resources. It reopened the investigation in 2013 after receiving complaints from several more homeowners about contaminated water.

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Perry's Texas where we can enjoy exploding drinking water straight from the tap.



- Posted by alanofaustin at 6:44 a.m. May. 29, 2014
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people will die because of Peter Pope and the state of texas.



- Posted by freelanceidiot at 7:59 a.m. May. 29, 2014
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That methane must have gotten there by an Act of God just like the explosion in West.



- Posted by candid at 8:26 a.m. May. 29, 2014
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Peter Pope knows who is buttering his bread. Mr. Hammond must be pleased to hear it.



- Posted by Inyourface at 8:36 a.m. May. 29, 2014
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When all the fracking is completed large swaths of Texas will be uninhabitable because of water contamination



- Posted by SameStory at 12:24 p.m. May. 29, 2014
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No the methane came from state leaders who are also cows.

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