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Saskatchewan

CO2 leaks worry Sask. farmers

The Canadian Press · Posted: Jan 11, 2011 11:58 AM CST | Last Updated: January 11, 2011

A Saskatchewan farm couple says greenhouse gases that were supposed to be stored permanently underground are leaking out, killing animals and sending groundwater foaming to the surface like shaken-up soda pop.

Cameron and Jane Kerr, who own land above the Weyburn oilfield in eastern Saskatchewan, have released a consultant's report that claims to link high concentrations of carbon dioxide in their soil to gas injected underground every day.

"We've lost a home, we've got a back yard full of sand and gravel that we don't think we can sell," Cameron Kerr told CBC News Tuesday.

Energy giant Cenovus injects 8,000 tonnes of the gas every day in an attempt to enhance oil recovery and fight climate change.

Cameron Kerr says ponds on his land have developed algae blooms, clots of foam and scum, while small animals have been found dead a few metres away.

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Cenovus told CBC News Tuesday they have done their own studies, which show no leaks.

"We've had some of the top experts in the world looking at this field, no one has found a problem," Rhona Delfari, communications manager for Cenovus, said Tuesday.

"I haven't seen any evidence that it's not safe," Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall said Tuesday, when asked about the claims made by the Kerrs.

The Saskatchewan NDP government had agreed to conduct a year-long study to find out what was going on, but that hasn't happened since the government changed in 2007.

Wall's minister of energy and resources, Bill Boyd, said Tuesday the government would look into the concerns raised by the Kerrs, but the carbon sequestration initiative would not be halted.

"If you're going to essentially slow down industry or have a significant economic impact on the province because of somebody's maybe not-so-well founded ... concern, I think we have to be very careful about those circumstances," Boyd said.

The suggestion that the Weyburn capture-and-storage project might be leaking could have implications for similar projects that try to store carbon underground, a technique being studied around the world with billions of dollars of public financing.

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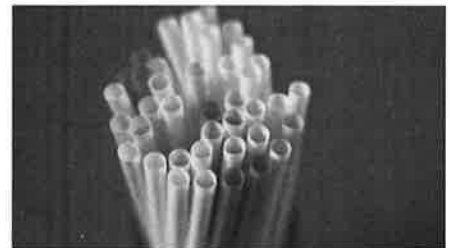
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