

Subject: TOM'S STORY: HOW FRAC SAND MINING AND HOW IT HAS IMPACTED HIS LIFE AND FAMILY

A STORY FROM JACKSON COUNTY ABOUT LIFE IN FRAC SAND TERRITORY



Tom Reininger from Jackson Co. wrote and delivered his personal statement to an audience this past Thursday in Black River Falls. He graciously gave me permission to share this unedited story with all of you. Don't miss reading it! Please share. Thanks, Tom!

Hi. My name is Tom Reininger. I'm a retired civil engineer, formally with the Department of Natural Resources. I would like to speak about two issues as related to frac sand mining. And they are kind of related to each other.

The first is my pursuit of peace, happiness and wellness for the remaining years of my life. I'm a Wisconsin native, born in Madison. I

consider Sun Prairie my hometown, but also lived a number of years in Eau Claire during my elementary education years. My dad worked for the State most of his life and would deer hunt in the Hixton area. While pursuing his own dreams, he eventually purchased 80 acres in 1960 and another 120 acres in 1963. He worked hard to demolish the old dilapidated farm house and replace it with a modest cabin built with both his and my sweat and blood. Just about everything my dad did was hard work, and I loved to help him with it. I learned to love the area and everything about it.

I went to college, UW Platteville and got my engineering degree. I landed a job in Chicago for American Bridge Division of US Steel. I lasted 4 years there. I couldn't take any more of the Chicago traffic, crowding, crime and corruption. So in 1978, I packed it all up and moved to Hixton. The cabin had no running water, just a well and an outhouse. An old Warm morning wood stove provided the heat. And I loved it. After making improvements, I got married, had a kid and figured I better make a home for myself. Dad gave me an acre and I built my own home nearby in 1986. A second child followed.

The work ethic my dad instilled upon me was still burning. I built a garage to complement the house. And I made extra payments on the mortgage to get out of debt sooner. But sometimes, even your best laid plans don't work out. In 2003 my wife & I divorced. I paid her half the equity we had built up so that I could stay on the land that I loved and in the house I designed and built. But now I had more debt to pay off. And I did. The goal was to have my house free and clear by the time I wanted to retire. By age 62, I had done it. Now it was time to kick back and relax with my second wife.

Now that I have bored you with my much abbreviated life history, the things I want you to take out of this is that I love the area, I've worked hard to improve the area and I want to die in the area.

Things were going along great until 2012 when the second issue arises, frac sand. Tom Gould lived two miles south of my house on a gravel dead end road. After his death, his daughter from Chicago got the 200 acres. She recreated there for some years, but eventually decided to sell the property. The buyer was North Cliff

Investments, LLC. This company is associated with badger Mining Corporation. My wife and I were told that North Cliff was only buying it to hold as “trade” property, so that if Badger found some highly desirable land they could use it as a bargaining chip to trade. If that was truly the case, why did they go into the hills and dig test pits to grade the sands?

My wife & I started attending the township’s monthly meetings to find out what was going on. As part of our quest for information, we went to a Town of Albion meeting where County Supervisor John Curran was trying to get sand mining introduced that would be in three townships, Albion, Adams and Hixton. We found out Mr. Curran was not concerned about Hixton because it was unzoned and would be easy to get into.

Back in Hixton, Supervisor Kevin Cain appeared to be supportive of a frac sand mining ordinance. A citizen’s advisory committee was formed and I was chosen to be one of the citizens. The first meeting was in December 2012. The anti-mining group worked hard researching other township ordinances and forming a draft version for Hixton. Supervisor Cain used the draft to form his own

version of the ordinance. A Public Hearing for the ordinance was held on May 14, 2013. Much of the Cain ordinance was different from the citizen's version. I asked for a moratorium so that issues could be fully discussed. But Mr. Cain stated "After 10 months, I'm not going to go there. It would take longer to enact a moratorium than it would this ordinance." Ordinance 2013-1 was enacted in June 2013.

The year 2014 was a terrible year. North Star Sands proposed a huge frac sand mine encompassing land both north and south of I-94. Logistics evidently changed the plan to two separate mines. In the Charcoal Road area, north of I-94 a mine and rail load out facility consisting of 1490 acres was planned. The North Star name persisted until AllEnergy became interested in the site. South of I-94, the 1350 acre mine was named Weststar Proppants until Unimin became interested in the site. Included in the proposed Unimin mine was land immediately east of my land that is owned by my two sisters and brother. This is part of my dad's original purchases in Jackson County.

All summer long company trucks with surveying & geological designations drove the

surrounding roads. Drill rigs and fancy SUVs also roamed about. Many test borings were drilled and on at least two properties high cap wells were installed. This included the Rollin Darst property and the Wally Everson property. Everson was a supervisor on the Hixton Town Board.

The most disturbing time in 2014 was when the Hixton Town Board modified the original mining ordinance. Ordinance 2014-1 in October 2014 & 2014-2 in November 2014 literally gutted the original ordinance and allowed for Development Agreements. The agreements were written by the industry under the guise that protections would still be provided to the citizens. The mines get all they want with a few concessions to the township. And they didn't waste any time either. Unimin submitted a Development Agreement that was finalized in March 2015. AllEnergy followed with a Development Agreement finalized in December 2015. It would have been November, but through their complete incompetence they had to do it twice.

Somewhere between all these events, probably at a Board meeting (but it could have been at a Public Hearing), I asked Kevin Cain what we

could do about this onslaught of sand mines. His advice was to cut your losses and just leave. Cut my losses? Property values drop 30% or more when you live next to a mine. Cut my losses? Health concerns from silicon dust in the PM 2.5 range coming at me from all directions. If all the proposed mines are built, it won't matter which way the wind is blowing. Cut my losses? Noise from heavy equipment and conveyors, lights from 24 hour a day operations, blasting, and the threats of water pollution. These are all concerns that are real for those living next to a mine. Should I really cut my losses and leave?

My wife and I have been given somewhat of a reprieve. Unimin has withdrawn their offers to purchase from the numerous absentee owners. Very few of the people signing on to sell to the mine actually live on the land. Their greed for money is easily satisfied when they don't have a vested interest. I still worry though. Unimin actually purchased land for a transportation corridor to the railroad. The loadout would be on Wally Everson's land. The 40 acres across the road from me was sold to Unimin for over a half a million dollars. Five hundred fifty thousand dollars for an old house, an old garage and a newer pole shed.

All are now gone, as are all the marketable trees that went with the previous owner.

As for Wally Everson, he resigned his supervisor position in the middle of his term after he finished getting the AllEnergy Development Agreement finalized. I filled an Affidavit with the Jackson County District Attorney outlining what I believe were wrong doings by Wally. The D.A. declined to make charges.

Me? I'm just trying to find peace, happiness and wellness for the remaining years of my life. An industrial sand mine should not be able to destroy a person's life work and dreams. As for property value guarantees...Why should sand mines be able to pay three times the going rate for land they want to acquire, yet only be required to pay fair market value for yours if you can't stand to be around them. My house needed a new roof. Will I ever get my money back from that expense? I can see Wisconsin Proppants mine from my mailbox. Will the pollution blowing from it kill me? Will I ever speak to my brother again for what he has done? I've decided to cut my losses and not leave. I've decided to fight, and that's why I'm here today. But I always have to remember,

there is still sand in my brother's hills and someone wants it bad.

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Welcome to the Frac Sand Sentinel, a newsletter highlighting resource links, news media accounts, blog posts, correspondence, observations and opinions gathered regarding local actions on, and impacts of, the developing frac sand mining and processing industries.

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CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE: CCC-WIS.COM and for additional information, [click here](#) for panoramic views of frac sand mines, processing plants, and trans-load facilities.