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**THE WALL STREET JOURNAL**

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## 9 NY families sue gas driller, say wells tainted

Associated Press

ELMIRA, N.Y. — Nine homeowners have filed a lawsuit against a Denver-based natural gas driller and its subcontractors, claiming the companies contaminated drinking water with gas and silt.

The lawsuit, filed Friday in state Supreme Court, claims that Anschutz Exploration Corp. was negligent in its drilling, construction and operation of two gas wells in Big Flats and that the company's actions resulted in contamination to nearby water wells.

A spokesman for Anschutz did not immediately return a call seeking comment Monday.

A state Department of Environmental Conservation spokesman would not comment on the lawsuit, but referred to a fact sheet DEC released in November. According to the fact sheet, the agency investigated resident complaints and found it unlikely the gas contaminating their wells came from drilling but was naturally occurring gas that could be dispersed by properly venting the water wells.

The company wells extract gas from the Trenton Black River shale formation 9,000 feet underground. The federal Environmental Protection Agency has launched a study of the impact of the extraction method, known as hydraulic fracturing, upon water supplies after concerns were raised in the Marcellus Shale region that underlies southern New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Ohio.

Hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking," taps into the gas by injecting chemical-laced water into the well bore at high pressure to crack surrounding shale rock. New York state has a moratorium on fracking until it completes an environmental impact study this summer.

In Pennsylvania, which is experiencing a natural gas boom, there have also been fights over whether the drilling process has the potential to contaminate nearby water wells. The Cabot gas company agreed in December to pay \$4.1 million to 19 homeowners in Dimock, Pa., whose private wells were contaminated by methane gas migrating underground from a drilling site. Cabot denies responsibility for the pollution.

The New York lawsuit seeks unspecified compensation and punitive damages.

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