

Gasoline Alley

By PETE PIRNIE

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has tolerated the presence of petroleum contamination at the Borodino Four Corners for at least a decade. Various technical workers complain that a plume of gasoline spreads under routes 174 and 41. Reputable realtors and the community at large maintain that underground petroleum storage tanks existed uphill from the intersection for many years. Recent DEC maps and accompanying reports denote "hot spots" throughout the area. Word is around that neighbors in the park section were unable to use water from their wells and in some instances forced to move out to protect their health.

During a recent investigation the New York State Department of Health tested eight individual drinking water supply wells in relation to previously identified spills of fuel oil and gasoline. In

the wells tested, no evidence was found to indicate a public health threat. However, the irony of the situation is that town of Spafford Supervisor Gordon Ireland would not allow testing of the Kissane property (that in my opinion) was suspect. I therefore conclude that the most contaminated well was omitted from the NYSDOH report. Has Supervisor Ireland demanded demolition of the Kissane house at 1865 East Lake Road in order to conceal various irregularities? After all, this structure was not considered a derelict property under prior Community Development Slum Clearance grants.

I understand that the DEC is a powerful agency assigned the authority and responsibility to identify the source of petroleum contamination at the Borodino Four Corners and to insure remediation. The DEC also has an obligation to people moving into the effected area on how far this pollution extends downstream. Furthermore, the DEC

track record for failing to act in a timely manner to prevent catastrophes, is replete with examples such as the notorious tire dump endangering Oneida Lake. And the Marks Farm liquid manure spill in Lowville. The latter event jeopardized water supplies along a 50-mile corridor including the city of Watertown. The pristine Black River was compromised for a major part of its length.

Guided by Skaneateles Lake Watershed Rules and Regulations, I again wrote to the Onondaga County Health Department asking for tests to be performed at the Kissane site. You guessed it - no response. It's stunning to witness governmental breakdown on all levels. Our local experience with agency ineptitude is a microcosm of the bungling associated with the Katrina disaster.

Editor's note: The author is founder of Citizens for Rural Improvement, a group dedicated to protecting health and safety in the town of Spafford.