



PRESS RELEASE

State Government Officials Fail to Manage Oilfield Brine Spills

August 2016

Produced water spills from oil and gas production have been occurring in North Dakota for decades, rendering patches of farmland unproductive due to the high salt content of the wastewater also known as “brine.” Despite working with oil companies and the Department of Health for years, landowners without connections to top state government officials do not see their land adequately remediated, as state government officials and oil industry heads claim:

“Every spill – 100 percent of them – are cleaned up.”

-Ron Ness, President of the Petroleum Council (Bismarck Tribune, 2016)

The Salted Lands Council believes the public deserves to know what is happening to the farmland of our state as a result of brine spills. In the following document we present aerial photographs of sites damaged by brine spills. We also discuss some of the major aspects in which our state government misreports brine spills, and fails to enforce complete remediation of the soil.

Even state Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring has failed to support farmers by blatantly denying that state agencies do not adequately enforce rules regarding spill clean-up.

“Let's be perfectly clear: The North Dakota Industrial Commission makes companies thoroughly clean up spills.”

- Doug Goehring (Ag Week, 2014)

“Saltwater” spills, as industry likes to call it, may sound harmless, but brine spills have a continuous impact on landowners as long as salt-damaged land is not remediated fully. Previously fertile farmland now affected by salts from oilfield brine spills has resulted in reduced crop yields in patches of farmers’ fields. The number of salt-damaged acres only grows as the brine salts spread in the soil and wetlands via groundwater. The Salted Lands Council asks you to view the aerial photographs provided to see how the words of state government officials do not match the reality on the ground.

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