

Gary Barnes is the fourth generation of his family to farm in Adams County, on the farm started 112 years ago by his great-grandfather. He farms organically and raises a small number of cows, calves, yearlings and a bull, grows crops to feed his cattle, buckwheat for his bees and had two 35-foot wells that supplied water for drinking and their cattle for over 100 years until 2012 when his cattle well went dry. At the same time, 75 16-inch diameter high capacity irrigation wells were operating within a 4-mile radius of Gary & his son Matt's farm. Their own drinking well at times was also pumping water sporadically and had a lowered water level. During this time, Gary noted that the neighboring high-capacity wells were operating 24-hours a day over potato crops in response to high temperatures.

Gary hired a local irrigation well driller to assess his problems and notified the DNR. The DNR stated that since this was a private water supply, the issue was a "water rights" matter and it was up to the parties involved to reach a settlement. The well driller recommended a new, deeper well be placed and so Gary decided that his best option to sustain his farm was to dig a new well, and have electrical cables placed underground to power the pump motor – all at a personal cost of \$8000. His new 2-inch well was dug 75 feet to find a good supply of water.

During much of the time Gary and Pamela have lived in their community, the expansion of high capacity wells, aerial spraying of liquid manure/fertilizer/herbicides/pesticides, previous over-spreading of paper mill by-products over near-by agricultural land, contaminated drinking water issues have resulted in divisions within their community, local township, county and state representatives as concerns and problems were identified. Gary has carefully collected facts about groundwater problems, reached out to state and federal representatives, attended township and county board meetings, written/testified/spoken with DNR officials about many of these issues, (including nitrate levels over 20 found in their country church's drinking water well, after 30 years of no nutrient management plan for a nearby large dairy farm). Community health concerns have been raised - a young family has an adjacent farm's high-capacity well spraying into their back yard and onto their house, a family developed rashes after showering with their well water (which had dried up and then pumped black sludge before water resumed), Gary's organically grown/harvested hay that is transported on roads where irrigation systems spray over the road risks being contaminated by sprayed herbicides/fertilizers, and is there a higher incidence of cancer in Adams Co? – all add to worries about their community and its future.

This has all caused Gary to state "No politician has ever tried to help me. Clean air, clean water is a God-given thing, and you need them to exist. Why don't they want to help me?"

Gary is the President of the Adams Co/Waushara Co chapter of the Wisconsin Farmers Union.