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An Investigation of Lesser-known Environmental Issues in the United States

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Honors Capstone Project in Broadcast Journalism

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Abstract

This Honors Capstone Project focuses on lesser-known environmental issues in the United States, mainly on the East Coast. The topics at hand are nuclear waste storage at the Savannah River Site in South Carolina, racism in the workplace at the Savannah River Site, mountaintop mining in West Virginia's Appalachian mountains, and the ramifications of hydraulic fracturing in Pennsylvania and how they apply to the future of the practice in New York.

This project consists of four mini-documentaries totaling 45 minutes in length. To put the first three pieces together, I reviewed interviews and conducted research on the subjects, wrote and voiced scripts, and edited video. For the final piece, in addition to those steps, I set up and conducted interviews and shot all of the video myself.

The purpose of putting together this series was to shed light on issues that the general American public may not be aware of or witness everyday, but directly affect the lives of people living nearby the areas where they occur. I aimed to deliver information about these problems to inform people and enable them to pass their own judgements and form educated opinions, whatever those may be. In doing this, I strove to equip people with the information necessary to create change if they feel motivated to do so.

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Reflective Essay

Investigative reporting is one of those areas of the news field that many people say they want to get into, but few actually do. It has a certain aura surrounding it that makes it appealing to journalists; it can be hard hitting, groundbreaking, and possibly world changing. However, a problem many news companies are faced with nowadays is a lack of money, time, and resources to spend multiple days, weeks, or even months on a single story. They are doing away with, or at the very least cutting down on, investigative units and the marketplace of ideas is infiltrated with skimming-the-surface short articles that often do not do a critical issue justice (Westland). This is why when I had the opportunity to intern at an investigative non-profit in Washington D.C. and expand upon and develop my work into an Honors Capstone Project, I seized it. When I first began brainstorming ideas for my project junior year, I never would have imagined I would end up creating a 45 minute investigative series on lesser known environmental issues. Each piece that is included has taught me in its own unique way lessons about researching, writing, shooting, editing, and myself as a journalist in the process.

My first three pieces in this series, "The Savannah River Site: Tank Farms," "The Savannah River Site: Race Relations," and "Mountaintop Mining" were completed for an internship with the investigative non-profit, the Public Education Center, also known as National Security News Service, in Washington D.C. It is owned by Joe and Susan Trento, who have years of experience in the investigative field working for national networks such as CNN. I was the only

intern for the summer, but I was treated more like a reporter. I was assigned their biggest stories of the year involving various issues with the Savannah River Site in South Carolina. They had spent the last few years going down to the site to take tours and conduct interviews with experts, but it was my job to sift through all of the information they gathered and create long-form pieces on the problems with the Savannah River Site's tanks farms and race relations in the workplace. My bosses encouraged me to take ownership of the pieces and although they were always willing to assist me, I did the majority of the work on my own including the writing and editing.

The first obstacle I had to overcome was learning about a topic that I had no idea existed the day before I stepped into my internship office. My first two weeks were spent sifting through videos shot over the course of a few years, watching hours upon hours of in-depth interviews, and trying to digest a rather complex scientific issue involving nuclear reactors and radioactive waste. The interviews averaged two to three hours in length and would take me an entire morning or afternoon to watch while logging important quotes and taking notes. I learned how important it is to include time stamps for quotes and take detailed accurate notes as trying to find two sentences within a three hour interview after the fact proves to be very time consuming. It was also difficult for me to learn how to tell the story of a place I had never been and a situation I did not witness. For Newhouse classes, we do the story gathering as well as execution of all of its elements ourselves. I had to become accustomed to watching interviews I did not conduct and learning the situation from an outsider's perspective.

While going through this long process, I questioned my interest in investigative journalism. I felt like I was thrown in head first into a topic that was too scientific for me to understand with no chemistry or physics classes past a high school level. But when the background information that my boss was telling me and the problems the interviewees were talking about started to click, I began to develop a firm handle on the topic and started truly enjoying the work. I learned not to get caught up in the scientific details and to focus on the major problems and the "people" part of the story, which proved helpful when I came to the writing process.

After going through most of the material about the Savannah River Site that had been gathered over the years, I began the process of writing what was the longest piece of my college journalism career at the time. I spent about a week of seven hour workdays writing the eleven and a half minute script for "The Savannah River Site: Tank Farms." This was the first time I had written anything journalism-related that lasted longer than five minutes. I generally write one and a half to two minute packages for class assignments, which is also what I will be doing in the near future when I find a local news reporter job. However, I was able to apply the writing skills I had developed in my journalism classes to the long-form writing process such as how to formulate a lead, what information would be best to explain in voice tracks, and which quotes would support and enhance what I was explaining or add another element such as emotion to the story. I appreciated being able to use extended quotes, explaining an issue in its entirety, and not having to cut out half the script after I finished writing it. Going

through this process once allowed me to be more efficient when writing my other three pieces.

Writing is one of the most critical components of a news story and it is the time when a reporter is forced to make certain choices that dictate the entire feel of the piece. In "The Savannah River Site: Tank Farms" I chose to start off the story in the neighboring town of Aiken, South Carolina as it is 20 miles down the road from the Savannah River Site and a very different kind of environment. I thought this would add a surprise element with the revealing of the town's proximity to the site and showing this contrast would make the piece interesting from the get-go as even some people living within a short drive of the site ignore its problems. I then chose to get right into the heart of the piece after giving a brief history synopsis of the Savannah River Site. I described the tank farms and the problems with the nuclear waste storage. Within my voice tracks, I chose quotes that have palpable emotion or showcase the opinions of environmentalists and experts on the nuclear waste issues. I spent a significant portion of the piece detailing the process of transferring the waste out of the tanks. This is a complicated process, but I broke it down as best as I could so a non-expert audience can gain a basic understanding of how glass vitrification works. Being able to simplify confusing concepts is a necessary skill in journalism. I decided to conclude the piece with a look at the future consequences of poorly-stored nuclear waste. For this section, the quotes I included are lengthy, but I wanted the interviewees to explain the future ramifications as opposed to myself because I wanted to speculate as little as possible. The way I elected to write this piece

made up the majority of the artistic choices in its creation as this was the part of it I could take ownership of since I did not do the shooting. The decisions I made in the editing process were my own, however, I was only trying to match up the video with the concepts I was discussing as often as I could rather than making true artistic decisions.

For my second mini-documentary, "The Savannah River Site: Race Relations," I took a more personal, less informational approach. I spotlighted three different stories of racism in the workplace at the site and chose to do so in chronological order because I thought that would make the most logical sense and allow viewers to see commonalities in the treatment of black employees throughout the site's history. Because this piece is less technical, it proved to be easier to write even though it is three minutes longer than "The Savannah River Site: Tank Farms." The quotes I chose for this piece especially showcased the emotions involved in having family members die possibly from radiation exposure or someone being fired for standing up for his or herself. The backbone of the piece is its characters: the Lindsay family, Willar Hightower, and Christy Johnson. Without their stories, it would be nothing.

Editing for "The Savannah River Site: Race Relations" was similar to the previous piece as I did not do the shooting. I could have used more video of the last two people I featured doing something other than sitting in an interview, but I tried to work with what I had at my disposal. I chose to use historical stock footage of the Savannah River Site for the entire portion in which I discussed the Lindsay family's story. I wanted to bring readers into the time period and give

them a sense of what the site looked like back in the years when Mr. Lindsay worked there. I moved to present-day footage for Hightower's and Johnson's stories for the same reason.

I reviewed the footage for my third piece, wrote it, and edited it in about one week. I would not have been able to do this in this small amount of time had I not had the experience of putting together the first two. "Mountaintop Mining" begins with documentation of what went on outside a closed meeting of mining industry lawyers about the Clean Water Act. This was included because the video accompanied a web story about the legal debates going on with the Clean Water Act and companies that practice mountaintop mining. The next section gives a glimpse at the repercussions the mining practice has in West Virginia. My boss edited in this extended voiceover between the beginning section about the meeting and the personal stories of locals. I prefer to use shorter voice tracks and more quotes, which is the how the rest of the piece is structured. I wanted Charles Bella III and Reta Conley to tell their own stories and show what mountaintop mining has done to their homes and livelihoods themselves.

Unlike the Savannah River site pieces, I did have more sufficient video for "Mountaintop Mining" to match up with what I was saying. I was able to describe the barren landscape with video shot from an airplane ride over Blair Mountain and the surrounding area. I had shots at my disposal of the damage to Conley's home and the jar of murky water Bella saved from a winter snow, for example. Instead of using "wallpaper b-roll," which is the majority of the video

in the Savannah River Site pieces, I was able to show what I was describing, which is always the goal in storytelling through video pieces.

"Savannah River Site: Tank Farms," "Savannah River Site: Race Relations," and "Mountaintop Mining" were completed within the eight week period of my internship from the beginning of June through the end of July. This experience was fundamental in the completion of this project as my work at the Public Education Center accounts for more than 30 minutes of the 45 minutes of video for this Capstone Project. It gave me a foundation for the process of writing and editing mini-documentaries, which allowed me to complete my final piece on hydrofracking by myself. It also allowed me to discover my passion for investigative journalism despite the initial difficulties, which was my reason for turning this into my Capstone Project. The intention of the Capstone is to pursue an interest in greater depth than one is able to do in classes alone. I was able to fulfill this by putting together "A Future for Fracking?" from start to finish this past semester. I am most proud of this portion of my project because I was able to apply my skills from the summer and reporting classes along with the passion I have developed for investigative work.

Because I completed all aspects of "A Future for Fracking?" myself, I was able to tailor the direction and feel of the piece from the start to what I wanted to cover as opposed to doing it for a job in which I was told what I should write about. I knew I wanted to use Pennsylvania as an example of a place where hydrofracking is being practiced and what this means for New York where there is still a ban on it. But at first, I struggled with looking for the proper people to

interview and show me what I knew I would need to see to get appropriate video, such as actual gas sites. I decided to ask a reporter from WBNG Action News 12 in Binghamton, where I was interning at the time, for her hydrofracking contacts. The station is not far from the Pennsylvania-New York border, so reporters are often sent down to cover hydrofracking news. WBNG reporter Kelly McCarthy recommended I speak to a few different people including Craig Stevens, who is a land rights advocate who speaks out all over Pennsylvania and New York about his opposition to the way gas industries are pursuing hydrofracking in the state. Stevens proved to be the key to access I needed to get sufficient material as well as the development of my story.

I drove down to Montrose, Pennsylvania for the initial shoot on a Sunday when Stevens had agreed to meet with me. Anti-hydrofracking activist Vera Scroggins also joined us for a tour around the area. We spent the day together driving to various gas pads and drilling sites, which allowed me to get more b-roll than I ended up even needing. They also introduced me to Tammy Manning that afternoon and I conducted the interview with her that formed a major section of my piece. I interviewed Scroggins later that day as well and decided to come back later that week to interview Stevens and to take a look at the pro-hydrofracking side of the story.

For my second day of shooting, I spent the morning with Stevens and Ray Kemble, who was one of the parties involved in a lawsuit case in Dimock, Pennsylvania. Kemble was an example of someone who experienced situation in which the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection did find

hydrofracking to be the cause of water contamination unlike Manning's case. To find a representative of the pro-hydrofracking side of the story, I set up an interview with Shelly DePue, who is a farmer and has leased her land to a gas company for hydrofracking. I had tried interviewing workers at a gas company as well as the farmer the first shoot day, but they would not go on camera or simply did not want to talk to me. DePue was very knowledgeable about the industry side of the situation and steadfast in her beliefs, which I think allowed for proper balance in my piece. Hydrofracking is truly a multi-faceted issue with many different perspectives and there is not much concrete evidence supporting one specific side yet. For this reason, I appreciated having the opportunity to produce and shoot this piece myself. I also could express my creativity behind the camera as well as demonstrate my shooting abilities, which I was unable to do for the other three pieces. Being in control of all aspects of this piece was rewarding and I was able to actually write about what I witnessed rather than what I heard in interviews and watched in videos.

The writing process for this piece was easy in terms of already being familiar with the material and the main issues, but became difficult because I gathered more information than I could fit in a 12 minute script. I had to make decisions on what to include and what to leave out. I narrowed down the issues I would discuss to economic effects and environmental effects with an emphasis on water contamination. I chose to cut out other aspects of the hydrofracking debate such as noise pollution, road conditions, landowner rights, and compressor station dangers among others. I did not include Stevens' and Scroggins' personal stories

and experiences with hydrofracking because I did not have sufficient time. I included DePue as a specific example of a farmer who leases land to hydrofracking companies and Manning and Kemble as personal stories of water contamination problems. I used the individuals' stories to guide the mini-documentary and tried to keep my voice tracks as short as possible. I started the piece establishing the scene and giving context to the situation of hydrofracking in Pennsylvania. I think it is important for people to understand what hydrofracking is, but I also did not want to make it too technical, which loses people's interest as well as gets away from the point of my piece. The story is more about people's personal experiences with the natural gas drilling process in Pennsylvania than the process itself.

After my adviser, Professor John Nicholson, reviewed my script, he sent it back with a small number of technical corrections, but quite a few areas that needed fact checking or additional follow up. Even more important in journalism than having the ability to write clearly and concisely is the willingness to do the actual gathering of information. I'm glad Professor Nicholson had me return to a couple of issues, such as the DEP's recommendations to Manning, because it made for a stronger piece. In checking on some facts of Manning's case, I found out a new development in the story and more details that I had not been told during the interview. This made her story as up-to-date as possible and, therefore, strengthened my piece. It also reminded me not to forget the investigative part of investigative journalism. Making dozens of phone calls to check facts, sorting

through court papers or state documents, and changing a story as needed are all critical parts of the process.

As for video editing, I was able to exercise more control over my shots and write to the video. I have less wallpaper b-roll than the other pieces because I knew what shots I would need to get to accurately depict a situation. I also had some help from Scroggins' 400 video YouTube collection. She told me I could use whichever videos I needed, which became helpful when I was discussing events that had happened in the past such as Manning's well spewing out water in December 2010. This video archive of the events in Montrose, Pennsylvania over the past five years was a great resource paired with the variety of b-roll I shot while spending two days touring the area.

Looking back at these four pieces, I can see obvious growth between them. I took multiple broadcasting classes from the time I finished my first three pieces and when I started the final hydrofracking story. In these classes, I mainly focused on the art of reporting, storytelling, and constructing packages from start to finish by myself under deadline. Having these experiences before putting together the final piece allowed me to better myself as a reporter. "Future for Fracking?" demonstrates improved voicing, writing, and information gathering abilities. I am satisfied to end my career as a broadcast journalism student at the Newhouse School with this piece as it contains a combination of skills learned over the summer at an internship as well as in classes over the years. The series is a culmination of all my efforts over the past four years and demonstrates my

maturation as a student journalist ready to go off into the career field and make a difference.

The purpose of this series of lesser-known environmental issues is three-fold. The primary goal of my series of pieces was to shed light on the issues, the debates surrounding them, and the experiences of people whose daily lives have changed in some way because of them. These problems have had little discussion on a national scope, but greatly affect the lives of people living within a certain radius of them. For example, googling "'Savannah River Site tank farms' 'problems' 'waste'" conjure six hits despite nuclear waste storage being a problem at the site for the past 30 years. Typing in "racism at Savannah River Site" brings up only two hits. As for hydrofracking, although the topic itself is discussed quite often in the media, it is not usually afforded an in-depth, unbiased report. The documentaries that have been put together, such as "Gasland," "Truthland," and "Drill Baby Drill," have some sort of underlying, biased motivator either in favor of the natural gas industry or against it. For example, "Truthland" was funded by gas companies to combat the claims made in the anti-hydrofracking "Gasland." For this reason, I sought to shed light on hydrofracking from an unbiased lens and create a truthful, neutral account of what I witnessed in Pennsylvania and what it means for New York. Calling attention to these issues created the cornerstone of the purpose of my Capstone Project and allowed for expansion to other goals.

As a journalist, I seek to provide people with information that then allows them to form their own opinions and make decisions about issues. By bringing

these issues to the forefront in my pieces, I am giving viewers a chance to decide if they care about an issue and if they might want to look into something further, support a certain cause, or make a call for change.

My third purpose of this project can be actualized through fulfillment of the first two goals. I worked on these pieces with the hope that by bringing these issues to light, people who do truly care about them and who think that change is necessary might be able to enact it. If I have informed someone who has then set forth to find more information and inspire the change they desire then I have succeeded in my role as a reporter. But inciting change can only happen when issues are laid out and people are mobilized to act on their own accord. The three goals work simultaneously to form the crux of investigative reporting.

I was successful in my aspiration to incite change for my first story, "The Savannah River Site: Tank Farms." The story was posted online at dcbureau.org on July 13, 2012. Minutes from a Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory board meeting only a couple weeks later on July 24, 2012 indicate the board discussed the problems with nuclear waste storage and some possible solutions. They acknowledged the urgency of the issue for the first time in 30 years. The recommendation from the board to the Savannah River Site included language from my story such as '"de facto" waste storage site.' It calls for the development of a way to ship the containers to an alternative location rather than continuing to store them in the Savannah River Site. Also, in the months following this recommendation two more nuclear waste tanks were closed ("Savannah River Site Celebrates Historic Closure of Radioactive Waste Tanks"). Seeing that the

publication of my piece brought about this acknowledgment from the Savannah River Site's Citizens Advisory Board reaffirmed my passion for investigative journalism and showed me that no matter how small I think what I'm doing is, it has the potential to make a real difference.

A variety of people from my academic and work life have made this project possible. I would like to start off by thanking Joe and Susan Trento whose faith in my abilities as an intern for the Public Education Center allowed me to develop my work into this project. Without their dedication, guidance, and knowledge about the investigative field, I would be turning in a completely different Capstone. I would like to acknowledge my Capstone Adviser, Professor John Nicholson. Having had Professor Nicholson for three broadcasting classes as well as my academic adviser, I knew he would push me to try my hardest and produce quality work. Also, I would like to thank my Capstone Reader, Professor Barbara Fought, for agreeing to review my work despite never having had me as a student. Lastly, the entire Honors staff deserves more than a shout out, but their dedication to the students and helping us find our way when we are lost, struggling, or just exhausted, is inspirational and a reason why I chose to stick with the Renee Crown University Honors Program and bring this Capstone Project to fruition.

"An Investigation of Lesser-Known Environmental Issues" has taught me what it takes to be committed and willing to do above and beyond what is necessary to obtain a degree. Through its execution, I believe I am leaving Syracuse University with a solid repertoire of investigative pieces, which not

many nearly college graduates can say. I hope whoever chooses to watch my series evaluates the situations through their own morals, spreads the word, creates change when necessary, and most importantly, makes what are now "lesser-known" issues into hot topics of conversation throughout the entire United States.

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Written Summary of Capstone Project

This Capstone Project evaluates various aspects of three lesser known environmental issues on the East Coast of the United States: the Savannah River Site in South Carolina, mountaintop mining in West Virginia, and hydraulic fracturing in Pennsylvania. To shed light on these issues, I have created a 45 minute series of four mini-documentaries. Two of the documentaries deal with separate past- and present-day issues at South Carolina's Savannah River Site, the largest nuclear waste storage facility in the United States. The third piece evaluates a specific method of mining and how it has affected the lives of locals in Blair, West Virginia. The final piece takes a look at the controversial natural gas drilling process of hydraulic fracturing, its implications in Pennsylvania, and what this means for the future of the practice in New York. The four pieces come together as an investigative series on issues that are either underreported or not reported in adequate depth.

The Savannah River Site is located 20 miles down the road from Aiken, South Carolina, across the Savannah River from Augusta, Georgia. It opened in the 1950s during the Cold War as a nuclear weapons production facility. The

nuclear reactors created large amounts of tritium and plutonium to produce hydrogen bombs. Despite the end of the Cold War and, subsequently, the end of the need for an excessive nuclear arsenal, nuclear waste from the weapons production process is still plaguing the Savannah River Site today. Nearly 40 million gallons of nuclear waste are being stored in tanks under the swampy ground in what are called tank farms ("Savannah River Site Facts" 2-7). There are 51 tanks total that are each the size of an NBA professional basketball court (Alvarez). Nuclear waste, which is highly radioactive, outlasts any material you put it in, so the steel tanks that hold it are starting to break down (Hamilton). Twelve of the tanks are known to have leaks (Clements). In 1996, the Savannah River Site began transferring the waste out of the tanks for longer-term storage, however, only four of the tanks have been closed since then ("Savannah River Site Celebrates Historic Closure of Radioactive Waste Tanks"). All of the tanks are supposed to be emptied by 2030 (Hamilton). My first piece, entitled "Savannah River Site: Tank Farms," details these modern-day problems with waste storage at the site.

The tanks contain two different types of liquid nuclear waste. Ten percent of the volume in the tanks is a sludge form, which accounts for half of the radioactivity. The other 90 percent is a salt form. These two kinds of liquid nuclear waste must be processed separately when they are removed from the tanks ("SRS - Programs - Waste Solidification."). There is some headway on transfer of the high-level radioactive sludge form however. It undergoes a process called glass vitrification. The waste is transferred to a facility where it is combined with

a special type of glass, melted, poured into a canister, and left to harden (Campbell). The canisters are then moved to a temporary storage building. The federal government has been searching for a permanent repository site, but has yet to come to a consensus on one. Until then, the canisters will continue filling up the ground of the Savannah River Site (Corbett). The goal is to produce 7500 canisters by 2025 ("Defense Waste Processing Facility").

The second piece in the series deals with a different issue at the Savannah River Site, race relations. Racial tensions ran high around the Savannah River Site as well as within it when it was established in the South in the mid-1900s. In "The Savannah River Site: Race Relations," I discuss the Lindsay family whose father died from cancer after working at the Savannah River Site. Three of the children reflect upon their father's story in the first half of the piece. Lindsay had been a principal at an all-black high school, but was offered a more lucrative job at the newly-opened nuclear production facility. African-American workers like Lindsay were not afforded the same privileges as the white workers, such as a laundry facility for their contaminated clothing, and were sometimes sent into the plants without their radiation badges that measured radiation exposure levels. Lindsay began showing signs of sickness, but continued working until he was too ill to do so anymore. Twelve years after starting to work at the site, Lindsay succumbed to the cancer. (Lindsay Family)

I also detail the stories of two people who worked at the Savannah River Site more recently and say they experienced racism in the workplace. Willar Hightower was the first African American recruited from college to work at a

programming lab at the site. He had been there for a number of years when he realized he was no longer receiving promotions while other people moved up around him. He says he believed racial discrimination from managers was the reason for his immobility in the workplace. Hightower filed a class action suit with other African American Savannah River Site workers in 1998. Hightower says he received a $50,000 settlement (Hightower). A previous Savannah River Site employee, Christy Johnson, also had a similar experience. She was working in the contracts department, but had a degree in information technology and was seeking a job with Savannah River Site in that area. When positions would open up, she would apply for them, but wouldn't hear back or was never afforded the opportunity for an interview. She said outside people were being hired who did not have her same credentials. She filed an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission complaint, which she says prompted her to be let go from her job. The EEOC did determine Johnson was not promoted because of her race (Johnson). "Savannah River Site: Race Relations" shows the personal stories from behind the nuclear reactors.

The third mini-documentary moves to the Appalachian Mountains in West Virginia where mining companies are beginning to use more violent, controversial methods to extract coal. Mountaintop mining aims to quickly extract coal by blowing the tops off mountains instead of digging in from underground (Bella III). In my piece entitled "Montaintop Mining," two locals, Charles Bella III and Reta Conley, describe how this mining process affects people living nearby. They explain how they are forced to deal with noise and air

pollution from the blasting. The population of the local communities as well as the surrounding environment are at risk (Bella III).

The final piece in the series deals with an issue in the Northeast that may not be underreported, but the details and implications remain unclear to many. Hydraulic fracturing, or hydrofracking, is a controversial process of extracting natural gas. It uses pressurized streams of water and chemicals to crack rock beneath the surface of the ground and release methane gas ("Hydraulic Fracturing: The Process."). It is currently not permitted in New York, but in the area around Montrose, Pennsylvania is legal and local communities are at war over the issue. Those in favor of hydrofracking see it as a way to bring money and jobs into the area (DePue). Landowners, such as farmer Shelly DePue, receive money for leasing their land as well as royalty payments each month for the extracted gas. But opponents to the hydrofracking industry say only 10 percent of the natural gas employees are locals, so there isn't as much job creation as promised (Scroggins). However, the question mark surrounding the process of hydrofracking is its potential environmental effects.

DePue and other hydrofracking supporters say hydrofracking is safe and the environmental dangers are over exaggerated. On the other hand, anti-hydrofracking activists say the effects on the environmental are very real. I tell the stories of a lawsuit in the town of Dimock that involved 19 families whose well water was contaminated in addition to that of Tammy Manning, who is still looking for specific answers as to why methane levels in her well water spiked to unsafe levels in a separate incident. The lack of information about the effects of

hydrofracking has prompted the state of New York to conduct health studies before deciding whether or not to permit it (DeSantis).

The purpose of this series of pieces is to spotlight environmental issues that are unknown to many, but for others are major parts of their daily lives. I wanted to give an account of what has happened and is happening in these local communities that are being affected. I sought to deliver information to people to help them form their own opinions about the issues, whatever those may be. As these are investigative mini-documentaries, I also created them with the mindset of wanting to make a difference by giving people information to enact change in their communities if they so desire.