

North Carolina Attorney General Roy Cooper Forces Fracking Company to Obey State Law

Improper solicitations of fracking leases will stop as an out-of-state firm warned by Attorney General Roy Cooper's office moves to properly register and stop soliciting landowners to sign illegal deals, Cooper said recently. As North Carolina moves forward with fracking to extract oil and gas, landowners need to learn about their rights and protections under the law, he urged.

"We fought for strong protections for property owners and it's important that you know your rights when it comes to oil and gas leases," Cooper said. "If someone knocks on your door and tries to push you into signing a lease that doesn't include the protections you deserve, let my office know."

Cooper's Consumer Protection Division is currently investigating one company that pushed potentially illegal fracking leases on landowners in Durham County. The company, Crimson Holdings of Pennsylvania, proposed paying landowners \$5 per acre to explore for oil and gas on their land.

The Attorney General's Office wrote to Crimson Holdings July 28 demanding that it cease offering or entering into oil and gas leases in North Carolina until it can prove that it is complying with state laws. The letter pointed out several problems that could potentially violate state law, including that the company isn't registered to do business in North Carolina and that its leases appear to last for more than 10 years, fail to give consumers the right to cancel, don't seek approval of the property owners' mortgage lender, and lack educational information required by law.

Crimson Holdings responded that it will change its leases to comply with North Carolina law. According to the company, it sent leases to more than 1,500 North Carolina property holders, though it was unclear Monday if any had been signed and returned.

Cooper offered some tips for consumers considering leasing their land for oil or gas exploration:

- Contact an attorney. Before you sign an oil or gas lease, contact an attorney and ask them to review it, especially provisions about payment and damages
- Contact your mortgage lender. If you have a mortgage loan, signing an oil or gas lease could violate the terms of your mortgage. It could also prevent you from being able to refinance your mortgage in the future.
- Check out the landman. Oil or gas leases are often offered by salesmen called landmen who are required to register with the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Check out a landman with DENR online or by calling 919-707-8605.
- Research the company. If you lease your land to a company for oil and gas exploration, you'll be dealing with that company for years to come. Before you sign a lease, check with the North Carolina Secretary of State's office to find out if the company is registered to do business in North Carolina.
- Get all promises in writing, and get a copy of your lease. Make sure any promises or conditions you discuss are in writing and are part of the lease. Also, be sure to get a copy of your lease.
- Get a copy of your legal protections. At the time landmen or companies offer you an oil or gas lease, they are required to give you a copy of the North Carolina law that protects you. Ask your lawyer to be sure your lease complies with North Carolina law or provides greater protections.
- Don't be pressured to sign. Take your time before you sign an oil or gas lease, and don't let high-pressure sales tactics force you to make a decision before you're ready.
- Know your right to cancel. If you sign, you will have seven days to cancel it under

North Carolina law without any penalty. To cancel your lease, send the company a written notice that you want to cancel.

For more tips plus a detailed summary of the protections available to landowners under North Carolina law, visit ncdoj.gov/fracking.

"Leasing your property for oil and gas exploration comes with risks, and that's why it's so important that you know your rights and do your homework before you sign a lease," Cooper said. "If you have problems or questions, our office can help."

To file a consumer complaint or talk to a consumer protection expert, call 1-877-5-NO-SCAM. Consumers can also file complaints online at www.ncdoj.gov.

Yucky or Yummy?

New method developed by NC State researchers gauges kids' liking of fruits and vegetables

Getting children to eat fruits and vegetables – especially the green ones – is no small feat. Researchers at North Carolina State University are trying to change that. Drs. Suzie Goodell and Virginia Carraway-Stage developed an innovative pictorial method to assess preschoolers' liking of familiar fruits and vegetables, expanding on earlier work from others in the field. Their goal, according to Goodell, assistant professor of nutrition science at NC State, was to develop a better tool that researchers could use with nutrition education programs designed to improve fruit and vegetable intake in children.

The project, Carraway-Stage's doctoral dissertation as Goodell's former student, was featured in the journal *Appetite* in April 2014. In the months following publication, it has garnered national and international attention. "We've heard from researchers all over the U.S. and world wanting to know more about our tools and our work," said Carraway-Stage, now an assistant professor of nutrition science at East Carolina University. "We want this to be a resource that people can use in their own work, and we're happy to partner with them to further the larger goal of helping children increase fruit and vegetable consumption as part of a healthy diet."

Goodell added, "The beauty of this tool is that anyone in the world could use it, no matter what language they speak, because the assessment method is based entirely on photographs."

So how does it work? During the testing period, trained research assistants sat down with preschoolers ages 3 to 5 at several different Wake County Head Start centers. Using an iPad, the research assistant would show 20 different fruit and vegetable images, one at a time, to the child. At the bottom of each image was a series of five choices, illustrated by a range of "super yummy to super yucky" faces. The child would be prompted to point to the face that best demonstrates his or her level of liking for the particular fruit or vegetable.

The data were collected and assessed by Goodell, Carraway-Stage and their team, and they determined that the method was effective through observation and statistical analysis. The resulting tool and associated materials are free and available for use by contacting Goodell at suzie_goodell@ncsu.edu.

"At the beginning of this process three years ago, we started out with more than 200 photos," said Carraway-Stage, who also served as photographer for the project. "We were able to refine them through testing to develop a collection of 20 images."

Recalling an incident in which one child mistook spinach for "a scary monster," Goodell said, "We needed to know that the pictures we were taking were being seen the way we wanted them to be seen."

More than 50 NC State students were involved in the process, doing everything from data collection to photo assessment. Several students conducted related honors research and capstone projects, presenting at national conferences and meetings. This was a welcome byproduct of the project, Goodell said. "For us, it's about building collaborations and strengthening research evaluation processes," Goodell said. "It's also very much about building capacity within our students to make them stronger when they go out into the workforce. We want to give them opportunities for exposure."

Goodell and Carraway-Stage continue to collaborate, most recently working together on a USDA grant proposal for nutrition education projects at North Carolina Head Start programs. To read about their project in *Appetite* visit www.sciencedirect.com.



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