

My husband and I have placer mining claims in Alaska near the border with Canada. Most of our claims are patented and therefore private property. My husband has 50 years of mining experience and I've been with him for 36 years. Over the years we've been visited by multiple regulatory agencies, all of whom arrived without prior notice, but all of whom sought us out, explained the reason for their visit and we proceeded from there. Our most recent visit by the EPA in no way resembled any of our previous encounters.

This experience began Tuesday, Aug. 20, 2013 with a single engine aircraft circling our camp at various times during the day, as well as flying up and down the creek which passes through our claims. We had no idea who it was or why there were circling our camp.

On Thursday, Aug. 22, 2013 the plane returned and again circled our camp several times and flew up and down the creek. We were becoming quite disturbed because it was now obvious we were under some type of surveillance and we wanted to know who it was and why we were being watched.

At approximately 5:30 pm that day I heard several 4-wheelers on the road below our camp, which is nothing unusual except the engines were suddenly shut off. I looked over the bank and saw 3 people wandering around. I headed down the hill toward them to see who they were and ask why they had stopped. As I got closer I was stunned to see that they all were wearing bullet proof vests and were carrying various weapons. I looked down the road and saw 3 more armed and vested people with my husband and son. My mind was reeling at this point because I'd never seen anything like that on our mining claims. I approached them and asked who they were. In response one of the men silently pointed to the words on his bullet proof vest which said "FEDERAL AGENT". I asked what that meant and they said "EPA". I then asked if there was something specific they wanted and they said there were taking water samples for the "Clean Water Act", though I didn't see them take any samples. They said they were going to check all our creeks, two of which actually converged right next to them. I suggested they go ahead and take their samples right there in front of me, but they refused. They said they were going to look around on our claims. I informed them it was private property and was posted as such. Their only response was "Clean Water Act". I also asked them about the aircraft that had been circling us and they denied knowing anything about an aircraft.

At that point they got on their wheelers and drove onto our property over to one of our shaker plants (used for sluicing), dismounted and began taking pictures of the shaker and surrounding area. I went to where my husband and son were talking with the other agents. He too questioned them as to why they were on our property taking pictures and what the pictures were for. The only response to him was the same that I'd received, "Clean Water Act" with no additional explanations. He also asked them about the air craft and one agent replied that it was their "air support". My husband inquired about the firearms and show of force and the only response to that question was, "It's policy". Two of the agents stayed close to my husband and son while another was on our property taking pictures of our other shaker box. My husband

questioned them about bypassing the “Private Property – No Trespassing” signs and taking pictures and again the only response received was “Clean Water Act”.

The 6 agents eventually left without any further communication with us. My husband, son and I were all very confused and upset about the entire encounter. At no time did any of them ever approach us and identify themselves. They presented no documentation to confirm their identities or explain the purpose of their invasion (the word “visit” is too civil a term for this encounter). We had to approach them. None of us witnessed them take a single water sample, so there is no way for us to verify if they actually did take samples, or if so where those alleged samples came from. The more we processed the encounter the more upset we became. We comply with all regulations and have never been cited for any violations. Suddenly and without provocation we are set upon by 6 fully armed agents on the ground and 2 in the air. They violated our property with no regard or respect for “No Trespassing” signs, and left us with the frightening realization that this is happening in the United States of America to law-abiding citizens and it’s being perpetrated by our own government.

On September 14, 2013 there was a meeting in Chicken, Alaska regarding EPA’s “visit” to multiple mining operations in that area. This meeting was attended by multiple miners; Sean Parnell, Governor of Alaska; representatives from the offices of Senator Murkowski and Congressman Young; as well as representatives of state legislators, along with Ken Fisher from the EPA in Juneau and Ted Murphy from BLM. Mr. Fisher and Mr. Murphy questioned about the necessity of the blatant show of force, as well as how they determined whom to visit. They stated that the list of mines they visited was a result of lengthy criminal investigations of miners with a history of non-compliance. They felt the weapons were necessary due to reports of heavy criminal activity in the area involving drug and human trafficking, and child endangerment as reported to them by Alaska State Troopers (which the troopers denied).

Submitted by Linda Kile