

# Protecting Communities and Special Places



e-Newsletter February 22, 2014



**"Tragic...You hear about it in other places, but you never think about it being here."**

*~ Dunkard Township Supervisor Joe Gacek  
on the Chevron Well Explosion and Fire*

KDKA CBS Local Pittsburgh

## IN THIS ISSUE

Homeowners Sue  
Fairfield Township

Greene County  
Well Explosion

Court Rules on Act 13

Slotterback Named  
to LCHIC Board

Jacoby Falls Hike  
Jim Slotterback  
Ted Stroter

Upcoming Events  
Raise the Region  
Act 13 on March 13  
Shalefield Justice

Take Action!  
Rally in the Rotunda  
URGENT: HB1576

Our Gratitude

Quote of the Day

Join RDA

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## HOMEOWNERS SUE FAIRFIELD TOWNSHIP to Block Drilling Site in Residential Area

Like so much of Lycoming County, PA Fairfield Township has rich natural beauty, priceless quality of life. Yet some see only the value they can extract - regardless of the impact.

Homeowners in Fairfield Township are suing to protect the homes and lives they have built there. Inflection Energy, LLC, based in Denver, CO, proposes to site heavy industrial operations -- a pad for multiple unconventional wells and a two-million gallon water impoundment -- in a residential neighborhood zoned as residential-agricultural (R-A). The site is within 3000 feet of 128 homes served by private water wells; at least one home is less than a thousand feet away. Inflection's application does not disclose how many wells it plans to drill on the pad.

The proposed site would be accessed from narrow, two-lane Quaker

## Court dismisses Governor's Challenge to Act 13

Announced just as we were getting this newsletter out, this decision once again asserts the Constitutional rights of our Commonwealth's people.

[Read more about it here.](#)

## UPCOMING EVENTS



**RDA Needs YOU!**

**RAISE THE REGION  
and support RDA!**

**6 p.m. March 12  
through  
11:59 p.m. March 13**  
Matching funds will stretch your gift!

First Community Foundation Partnership of Pennsylvania announces Raise the Region 2014, an event to help the community support local nonprofit organizations' fund raising efforts. FCFP, in partnership with Blaise Alexander Family Dealerships, will launch a 30-hour fundraising event on March 12 & 13, 2014.

Blaise Alexander Family Dealerships has donated \$125,000 that will be used to stretch every donation made to preregistered nonprofits. Additional monetary prizes and incentives will be awarded throughout the event.

### How it works:

Beginning at 6 p.m. on March 12, visit...

[www.raisetheregion.org](http://www.raisetheregion.org)

...from a computer, smart phone, iPad, tablet, etc.

Identify the nonprofits participating in the events

State Road, which winds through tranquil landscapes, passing apple and peach orchards, woodlands, farms, and homes where families live and play.



Inflection's estimates project an additional 300 trucks on Quaker State Road during construction, with 120 trucks per well added during drilling and 225 trucks during completion. Chemicals and drilling wastes, such as flowback liquids and drill cuttings, will be stored onsite and hauled by truck.

Inflection estimated another 1600 tank truck trips on the road each time a well is fracked, unless Inflection can build a pipeline to bring water in. At the time of the appeal no pipeline permits had been sought.

During drilling and completion of each well work will go on around the clock, with stadium-like bright lights illuminating operations.

This is not the first time Inflection has sought to place drilling operations close to people. Not far from where Quaker State Road meets State Route 87, Inflection's "Ultimate Warrior" site sits almost on top of the Community Baptist Church, across from a quiet neighborhood. Farther up the road, Inflection's "Nature Boy" site is a stone's throw from Loyalsock Creek -- an exceptional value waterway that is also near the "Ultimate Warrior" -- and three-tenths of a mile from Loyalsock Valley Elementary School and children's soccer fields.

Despite strong opposition voiced publicly by Quaker State Road neighbors, township supervisors voted 2-1 approving Inflection's plans for the Shaheen well site. Homeowners responded by filing a legal appeal on January 17. However, supervisors did not mention the suit at the February township meeting. It has so far received no publicity.

The homeowners are represented by Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future (PennFuture) in the person of attorneys George Jugovic and Mark Szybist. Szybist is a member of RDA's board.

Ironically, the two supervisors voting to grant Inflection's Conditional Use application may have felt they had no choice, fearing a lawsuit by Inflection if they did not approve it.

Beyond traffic safety risks and risks to family water wells, Inflection's operations will generate air pollution including nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), carbon monoxide (CO), and volatile organic chemicals (VOCs), which may include benzene, ethylbenzene, toluene and xylene. VOCs contribute to asthma and other respiratory problems, some have been linked to cancer, and they can react with NO<sub>x</sub> to form ozone -- another respiratory irritant. Once wells are producing gas, there will be continual VOC emissions from gas dehydration, plus the risk of methane leakage.

and see how our work helps our community.

Donate online to support RDA (and any other nonprofits you choose) on the Raise the Region website. See running totals throughout the day.

At the end of the period stretching funds will be applied to each gift as a prorated match and FCFP will send checks to all participating nonprofits with the amount raised, the prorated stretch, and any extra money from prizes awarded throughout the day.

**Only credit card donations through [www.raisetheregion.org](http://www.raisetheregion.org) during the 30-hour window will be matched.** No donations via check, cash or stock will be accepted for the matching program. The minimum gift per nonprofit is \$25 and the maximum that will be stretched is \$10,000.

**Each gift is 100% tax-deductible.**

**Mark your calendar** for this fun way to **help RDA and stretch your donation!**

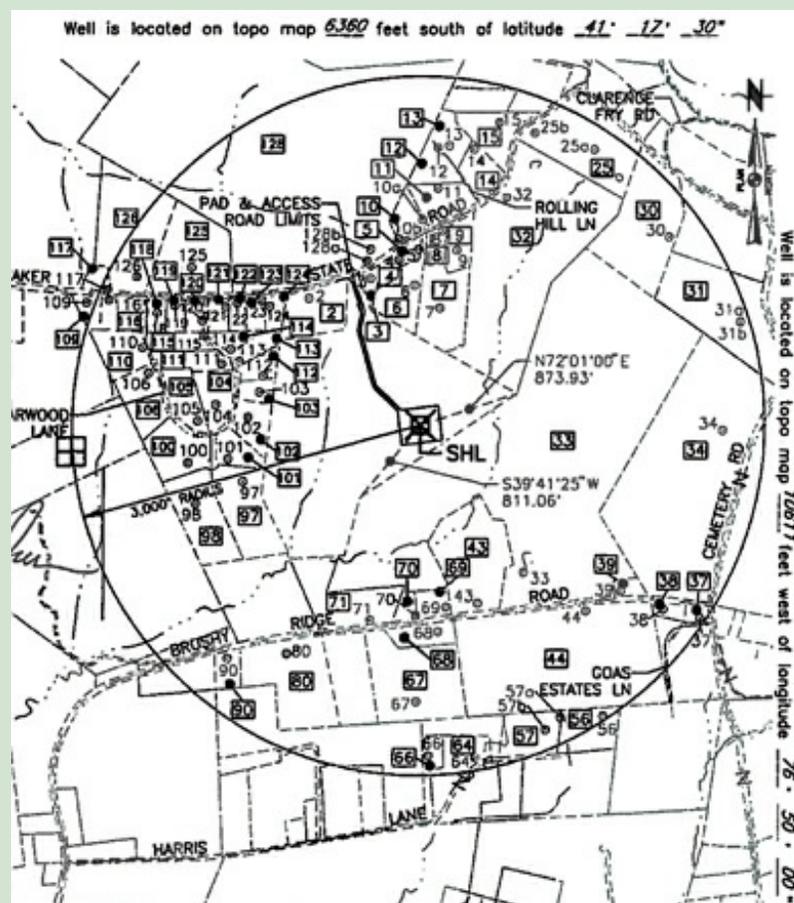
**Act 13 on March 13**

**March 13**

**Doors Open 6 p.m. Forum and Webcast start at 6:30 p.m. Wine and cheese reception follows**

Delaware Riverkeepers Network will host a live event and webcast at the WHYY Studio, 150 North 6th Street, in Philadelphia that will bring together the lead litigators and litigants of the Act 13 case.

Get the inside story on the landmark case that overturned the pro-drilling Act 13 and affirmed our



*Inflection Energy's application for the Shaheen Zoning Permit shows 128 single family homes within 3000 feet of the proposed well site that are served by private drinking water wells.*

And as we have just seen in Greene County and where other well explosions and fires have happened, a well site in residential neighborhoods would force people to live within what may become catastrophic "incident" perimeters.

The appeal cites the township's failure to abide by its legal obligation to "promote the public's health, safety...and general welfare, encourage the most appropriate use of land, conserve and stabilize the value of property" and "lessen congestion on streets and highways." Neither the R-A zone's permitted nor conditional uses allow for heavy industry. The township's Industrial Zone does allow "surface mining," including natural gas extraction. The appeal also lays out Inflection's failure to show its operations would not negatively affect public safety or the environment.

Ultimately, the appeal rests upon the state Constitution. By granting Inflection's request, the Township endangers its residents and fails to uphold their Constitutional rights to "clean air, pure water, and the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic, and esthetic values of the environment."

RDA supports these citizens -- and will follow the progress of this legal action.

## **GREEN COUNTY WELL EXPLOSION**

### ***Lessons in Damage Control***

At 6:45 a.m. on February 11, a massive explosion at a Chevron gas well site near Bobtown, PA killed one person, injured another, and ignited a fire that burned for seven days. The exploding well ignited an adjacent well on Feb. 14. Throughout the week flowback fluid rose periodically to extinguish flames, which would reignite over and over like trick candles on a huge, intensely volatile birthday cake.

right to a healthy environment. Both live and online participants will be able to submit questions.

Details and registration will soon be available at

[www.delawareriverkeeper.org](http://www.delawareriverkeeper.org)

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### Shalefield Justice Spring Break

**March 15-22**

Krislund Camp  
Madisonburg, Pa.

[Look here for more information and to register](#)

### TAKE ACTION!

**Not in our  
Neighborhoods--  
Not in our Forests!!**

**Rally in the Rotunda  
Tuesday, February 25  
at 12 p.m.**

in the Capitol at Harrisburg to present a petition and to tell Gov. Corbett and the legislature to not frack our state forests. Contact Clean Water Action at 717.233.1801 for more information.

[Click here to sign the petition](#)

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**URGENT ACTION  
NEEDED  
HB 1576**

**Act BEFORE March 11**

Tell your representative: stand up to the gas industry -- stand up for us and for wildlife!

[Download details here](#)

[Find your representative and contact info here.](#)

[See the bill and its history](#)

As of February 20 the wells were still uncontrolled and an extremely dangerous situation continues at the site. Houston-based well control contractors are coordinating efforts to cut away the two wells' damaged upper portions, provide connection points for blowout prevention equipment, and then cap the wells. A third well's status and future are still unknown. Chevron projects efforts will take several more days, warning the community that operations will be loud and may involve gas flaring, asking residents "not to be alarmed."

Although workers escaping the inferno had identified missing contract worker Ian McKee, pinpointing his location near the explosion, for more than a week Chevron refused to name him or give any details. The Warren, PA man's family and friends held a candlelight vigil for him on February 13.



Times Observer photo by Rob Andersen, copyright Times Observer, used by permission.

Intense heat and fire kept anyone from getting close enough to search for Ian's body. Chevron turned the investigation over to the PA state police, whose forensic specialists found what they believe to be Ian's remains nine days after the fire. At that point Chevron expressed "heartfelt sadness" in announcing the news.

Early on, Chevron set up a PR command post at the Bobtown Polish Club, nearly two miles away; from its doorway the fire could clearly be heard. Chevron continued updating media and reached out to the community: "As part of our comprehensive response to the incident, we have communicated with area residents to answer their questions and capture their concerns." When web sites reported, later picked up by CNN, that this included going door to door, handing out certificates for free pizza and pop from Bobtown Pizza, public response ranged from incredulous derision to rage.

Back at the pad, Chevron and its well control contractor struggled to gain control of the situation. "We are working at a pace that helps ensure the safety of all involved in responding to this incident," Chevron said. Translation: we're doing this as fast as we can without screwing things up further or getting anybody else killed.

Continuing to describe the explosion and fire as "the incident," Chevron pulled people from other operations to help handle the crisis. Building a 28,675-square-foot pad next to the burning wells for 20, 500-gallon tanks, Chevron trucked in water and obtained an emergency DEP permit to withdraw 1.25 million gallons of water daily from nearby Dunkard Creek.

PA State Police established a half-mile perimeter around the site, while Chevron's 1500-foot perimeter around the fire zone kept everyone else presumably at a safe distance. DEP's spokesperson told the Associated

[here.](#)

Help our Commonwealth  
**KEEP IT WILD!**

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**Join RDA!**

We welcome your active participation and are in need of help for special events, publicity, research, and other projects. Contact us for details.

Membership levels:  
Adventurer.....\$10  
Explorer.....\$20  
Woodlander.....\$50  
Guardian.....\$100  
Naturalist.....\$500  
Preservationist...\$1,000

As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, RDA relies on donations for the important work we do. In order for RDA to continue its valuable education and advocacy outreach in 2014, please consider a tax-free contribution to our efforts.

Please use the Donate button below to send a donation or join online, or [download the membership form here.](#)



**Our Gratitude**

... to Ann Pinca for her leadership, skill, and dedication in writing, editing and publishing this weekly newsletter for more than a year. She has set the bar high -- and we'll do our best to live up to her example.

So, as Ann put it last week, stay tuned for next week's newsletter, stay warm, and, as always...

**KEEP IT WILD!**

Press that the wells were located in a rural area where no homes or schools are nearby. However, he said the flames burned so hot that DEP crews had to stay about 300 yards away.

"Out of an abundance of caution," Chevron said, "we continue to monitor the air, surface waters and noise in the area for any signs of impact." Providing gas monitors to "aid responders," Chevron said on day three of the uncontrolled fire, "At this point we have no indications that this accident has created any safety risk."

Except, of course, to Ian McKee; the injured man, still not named; and local fire companies and first responders who came to the ridge-top to help deal with the fire. Fortunately, Chevron's "thoughts and prayers" were with "all of our employees, contractors and emergency responders."

Chevron's thanks to the PA State Police and "our local fire departments" - and the perhaps coincidental announcement Feb. 15 of Chevron donations to fire departments in western PA, Ohio, and West Virginia - are grim reminders that it is our own communities' men and women who must put their lives on the line to protect the gas industry's well sites. It is our own first responders who have to step up.

"The hazmat teams and volunteer fire departments in our operating areas are indispensable to the health and safety of their communities," said Trip Oliver, manager of public affairs for Chevron's Appalachian/Michigan Strategic Business Unit.

We know that. And if gas companies are allowed to put well sites near churches, elementary schools, and residential areas, it will be a lot more than our pristine mountaintop ridges they will have to protect.

"Wells going out of control are rare events, but they're almost certain to happen," said John Hanger, former DEP Secretary.

When it happens in our neighborhoods, how long will the energy companies refuse to name the workers, the first responders, the homeowners whose property and lives are within the "incident perimeters," who may be killed?

Ultimately the issue is not the quality of Chevron's public relations damage control. It's the risk of catastrophic damage to our homes, schools, churches, streams, ridge tops, and way of life.



Bobtown, Pennsylvania

*Photo by Bob Donnan, used by permission, courtesy of the PA Forest Coalition*

## RDA Board Member Named to LCHIC Board

Jim Slotterback, RDA board member, has been named to the board of Lycoming County Health Improvement Coalition (LCHIC).

LCHIC, established in 1994, comprises Lycoming County's major public health and safety stakeholders, both government and private, regularly bringing together the highest levels of expertise and dedication.

A professional responsible for coordinating Emergency Preparedness, Jim is a licensed Paramedic with nearly 30 years' experience. His extensive training includes Emergency Management, Emergency Health Services, Hazardous Materials, Mass Casualty Hospital Response, Advanced Life Support, and other areas, at the local, regional, statewide and national levels.

Like other LCHIC volunteers, Jim cares deeply about his community and brings a wealth of knowledge to this new responsibility. We congratulate Jim and LCHIC and thank them for their service.

## RDA's February 16th Hike to Jacoby Falls

*Photos by Jim Slotterback*



### Keep It Wild Hike

Jim Slotterback, RDA Board of Directors

One of our most beautiful hikes to date. We explored the most amazing ice caves under Jacoby Falls. The sounds under the frozen falls were amazing! Dripping water echoed through the caverns and water ran down the bare rock in areas. I have never experienced anything like these ice caves before! Truly a "Special Place." Great company and another great hike!



### **Engineer's Epiphany**

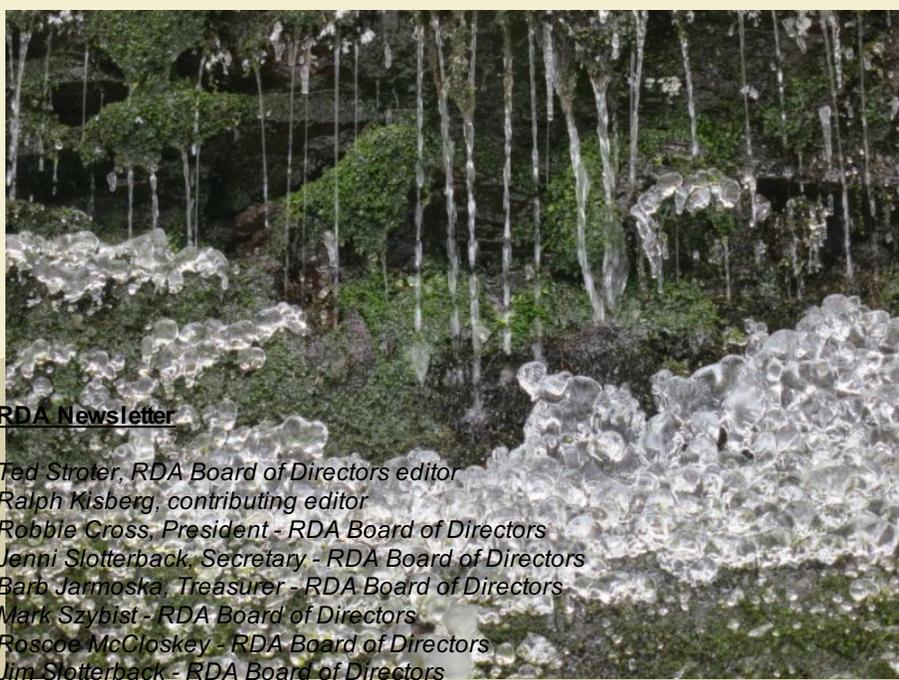
Ted Stroter, RDA Board of Directors

*Environmentalist: any person who advocates or works to protect the air, water, animals, plants, and other natural resources from pollution or its effects.*

After an incredible hike to see Jacoby Falls in the Loyalsock State Forest the definition above came to mind and seemed very relevant. While the hike into the falls with several wonderful RDA members, a first time participant and several friendly, furry four-legged companions was beautiful, but a bit challenging in the new snow, I was totally unprepared for what we observed when we got there.

I have enjoyed hiking for well over 50 years and cross country skiing for over 40 and enjoyed every minute of exploring the wonders of nature. However, I am struggling to find the appropriate adjective(s) to describe what my first experience with Jacob Falls in the winter was like. With the falls totally frozen over with a majestic curtain of ice, we were able to find a small opening we could squeeze through and there we were certainly in the front row of Mother Nature's church! For a nature lover, beautiful or exquisite doesn't seem to do justice to describe the numerous columns of ice, the stalactites, the stalagmites, nor the many mini-rivulets of water trickling down from them. For me it was soothing to the mind, the body and the soul. Probably the closest experience to this was my first fishing trip up through the canyon-like section of Rock Run, also in the Loyalsock State Forest. Mother Nature has gifted this area of Pennsylvania with an abundance for us and future generations to enjoy.

Unfortunately, always in the back of my mind is the thought that so much greed and ignorance is trying to diminish these wonders by threatening them with desecration or rape of our "Mother" for some small, short term economic gain by a few. So I am a scientist, an engineer, an outdoors man and a proud environmentalist who understands what is right. And our state forests, unblemished and protected, are right!



**RDA Newsletter**

*Ted Stroter, RDA Board of Directors editor*  
*Ralph Kisberg, contributing editor*  
*Robbie Cross, President - RDA Board of Directors*  
*Jenni Slotterback, Secretary - RDA Board of Directors*  
*Barb Jarmoska, Treasurer - RDA Board of Directors*  
*Mark Szybist - RDA Board of Directors*  
*Roscoe McCloskey - RDA Board of Directors*  
*Jim Slotterback - RDA Board of Directors*

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*Please note: The RDA newsletter includes reporting on a variety of events and activities, which do not necessarily reflect the philosophy of the organization. RDA practices only non-violent action in voicing the organization's beliefs and concerns.*

*Return to top*

Contact RDA with questions and comments using either the address below, by email at [responsibledrillingalliance@gmail.com](mailto:responsibledrillingalliance@gmail.com) or by phone at 888.332.1244 (toll free).

For more information, visit the [RDA web site](#), or like us on [Facebook](#).

Donations can be sent by mail to: Responsible Drilling Alliance, P.O. Box 502, Williamsport, PA 17703

**Thank you for your support!**

**Donate**

