



Panelists testify in Monday's HB 2318 DCNR transparency hearing - photo credit: Richard Karp

Greetings!

When it comes to gas drilling in PA, if you think land owners have a say and regulatory agencies have things under control - think again. Fortunately, a handful of elected officials and former state employees have stepped up to the plate, spoken out, and taken steps that could lead to improvements in the "business as usual" practices that the gas industry has enjoyed in the PA Marcellus.

In this issue, feature stories provide a 1-2-3 punch regarding DCNR transparency, DEP oversight, and PA Department of Public Health disregard of citizens' health concerns.

The sidebar column, "In Other News," includes breaking news from DCNR regarding the Clarence Moore lands of the Loyalsock State Forest, an important study by NY health professionals, an update on the PEDF lawsuit against Governor Corbett, and news of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network's pursuit of information about radiation at gas well sites. There are also a handful of links to letters and petitions you can sign in support of industry limitations/regulations and transparency. If you haven't done so already, RDA urges you to participate in the "Action Points" listed in the sidebar.

Thank you for caring, and staying informed.

Sincerely,

Brooke Woodside
Managing Editor
www.RDAPA.org

Transparency and Participation Bill Unveiled

HB 2318 would allow public participation in decision-making

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In Other News

DCNR Breaking News

DCNR will seek public comment on the draft development agreement for gas extraction in the Clarence Moore lands of the Loyalsock State Forest, Lycoming County.

There will be a 15-day public comment period once the plan is presented.

[Click here to read the full details released by DCNR yesterday.](#)

New York Health Professionals Release Major Scientific Document on Fracking

The group is also requesting a meeting with acting Health Commissioner Zucker after a

Initiated by State Representative Rick Mirabito (D-84th), the PA House Democratic Policy Committee held a hearing at Lycoming College on July 28th. The purpose was to introduce and receive public input on HB 2318, legislation drafted by Mirabito that would increase DCNR's transparency regarding unconventional gas operations, and allow citizen landowners of PA public lands to have a voice regarding industrialization of these lands by gas companies. Mirabito's bill would require public notice and input before the DCNR leases and/or authorizes gas development on state forest lands.



photo credit: Richard Karp

During the 3-hour hearing, 7 panelists as well as members of the 100+ audience shared testimony with Mirabito and more than a dozen of his fellow House members. Each of the panelists spoke favorably of HB 2318, urging its passage.

RDA president Robbie Cross was the first to speak, and reminded the legislators that, "A poll conducted by Franklin and Marshall College released in 2013, found that 68% of Pennsylvania participants oppose opening more state land to drilling. RDA not only supports the 68% majority but supports a moratorium on all new unconventional drilling until the completion of a statewide impact assessment shows the drilling can be done in a manner consistent with citizens rights and governments duties under Article 1 section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution."

PennFuture Staff Attorney Mark Szybist, also an RDA Board member, reminded legislators of the complete failure of DCNR to make any record of the comments made at a public hearing regarding the Loyalsock State Forest near Rock Run, a hearing attended by over 500 citizens. Szybist also spoke about DCNR's unique legal powers to prevent gas development on the 26,000-acre Clarence Moore tract of the LSF.

PA Sierra Club Director Joanne Kilgour listed the impressive income PA receives from our state's extensive state park system and public lands - warning that billions could be lost should gas drilling make these areas less appealing and/or unavailable to tourists and nature-lovers.

PEDF attorney John Childe gave an update on the lawsuit against Governor Corbett, detailing the charges made against the administration.

Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Executive Director, Harry Campbell explained how sediment and erosion from thousands of forested acres cleared for well pads and the hundreds of thousands of trees felled to build pipelines will have serious and

recent Court of Appeals decision. This new scientific compendium demonstrates the imperative for a statewide moratorium.

The study shows the following evidence of risks, harms, and associated trends:

- air pollution
- water contamination,
- inherent engineering problems that worsen with time
- radioactive releases
- occupational health and safety hazards
- noise pollution, light pollution and stress
- earthquake and seismic activity
- abandoned and active oil and natural gas wells (as pathways for gas and fluid migration)
- flood risks
- threats to agriculture and soil quality
- threats to the climate system
- inaccurate job claims, increased crime rates, and threats to property value and mortgages
- inflated estimates of oil and gas reserves and profitability
- disclosure of serious risks to investors
- medical and scientific calls for more study and more transparency.

[Click here to read more from the Concerned Health Professionals of New York.](#)

PEDF Lawsuit Update

Governor Corbett has agreed not to lease any more state forest or park land until the Commonwealth Court decides the merits of PEDF's case. Briefing of the issues is due Sept 14, and oral argument is set for October.

[Click here to read more about this case on the PEDF website.](#)

long-lasting consequences for the bay.

Audobon PA's Director of Conservation, Paul Zeph, educated representatives about forest ecology and edge habitat, two serious concerns that are largely overlooked by those in power.

Keystone Trails Association Executive Director, Curt Ashenfelter, presented legislators with an 8-point list of the ways the gas industry is in conflict with those who use PA's public lands for recreational purposes.

Both the gas industry and DCNR received formal invitations to attend the hearing; both were noticeably absent. One gas company submitted a letter which was read aloud. The letter claimed that passage of HB 2318 would "strangle and destroy" the industry. RDA finds it interesting that giving the owners of public lands a voice in the process could "strangle and destroy" an industry that claims to be a transparent and environmentally-conscious good neighbor.

RDA supports Mirabito's bill, and invites you to [click here to view House Bill 2318 and all of the submitted testimony formally presented on July 28th.](#)

PA's Auditor General Calls Gas Development a "Five Alarm Fire"

Report by DePasquale says rapid shale gas development outpaced DEP's ability to oversee the industry and protect water quality. DEP was unprepared in 2009, and is now understaffed, underfunded and inconsistent.

News Release - PA Department of the Auditor General

Harrisburg - July 22, 2014 - Auditor General Eugene DePasquale today said that a recent audit shows that the meteoric growth of the shale gas industry caught the Department of Environmental Protection unprepared to effectively administer laws and regulations to protect drinking water and unable to efficiently respond to citizen complaints.

"There are very dedicated hard-working people at DEP but they are being hampered in doing their jobs by lack of resources - including staff and a modern information technology system -- and inconsistent or failed implementation of department policies, among other things," DePasquale said. "It is almost like firefighters trying to put out a five-alarm fire with a 20-foot garden hose. There is no question that DEP needs help and soon to protect clean water."

The audit covered the period of 2009 through 2012 and was launched by DePasquale in January 2013 immediately after he became auditor general. The audit's purpose was to assess DEP's ability to protect the water quality in the wake of greatly escalated shale gas well drilling.

The audit revealed that DEP failed to consistently issue official orders to well operators who had been determined by DEP to have adversely impacted water supplies. After reviewing a selection of 15 complaint files for confirmed water supply impact, auditors discovered that DEP issued just one order to a well operator to restore or replace the adversely impacted

Which Release is worse - radiation of information on radiation? DEP told to hand over data on well sites

It's well established that radiation can be harmful. But is it possible that the release of information about radioactive material is dangerous as well?

That was an argument that the state Department of Environmental Protection made when it denied a request from an environmental group for recently collected information about radiation levels in and around oil and gas well sites in the Marcellus shale region, along with other related information.

The state's Office of Open Records ordered the state Department of Environmental Protection to release records it has on radiation levels at gas and oil well sites in the Marcellus shale region, along with other information, requested by the Delaware Riverkeeper Network.

[Click here to read the full article from pennlive.com.](#)

Frack Free Parks

The Campaign Continues

It's not too late to participate in the "Frack Free Parks" campaign initiated by the Save the Loyalsock Coalition. Take a "selfie" in the woods with [THIS SIGN](#) and email it to frackfreeparks@gmail.com so they can upload it to the tumblr site. Then feel free to share it all over your other social media.



photo: Ted Stroter

[Click here for more information](#)

PA Moratorium Petition

Request a Moratorium on Further Leasing of our State Park and Forest Land

water supply.

DEP claims that in many cases such orders are procedurally unnecessary as well operators may have already taken steps to restore the water supply under what the agency terms "voluntary compliance."

"When DEP does not take a formal, documented action against a well operator who has contaminated a water supply, the agency loses credibility as a regulator and is not fully accountable to the public," DePasquale said. "When DEP has enforcement authority under the law it must exercise that authority routinely, consistently, and transparently. [Click here to read the full article presented on the PA Dept of the Auditor General website.](#)"

Is the Pennsylvania Department of Health Frac-phobic?

Its actions don't instill confidence that it is protecting us, write nurses Ruth McDermott-Levy and Nina M. Kaktins.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette - July 27, 2014 - Imagine you're a parent living near a natural-gas fracking site in Pennsylvania when suddenly your child begins having nose bleeds and skin rashes. The pediatrician suspects some type of exposure from the nearby well, and you've heard stories on the news and from neighbors about health issues related to fracking. You decide to call the health department, a trusted source of information. But no one returns your calls and your questions remain unanswered.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health is charged with ensuring and protecting the health of all state residents. It fulfills this obligation by partnering with communities to monitor existing and emerging health problems and to establish programs that prevent disease and injury.

Over the years, the health department says, it has adapted its mission to "meet the needs and demands of the dynamic nature of public health" and affirmed its "commitment, dedication and professionalism ... to provide top-quality programs and services that benefit the health, safety and well-being of all Pennsylvanians."

Recent revelations and allegations indicate the health department may not be serving all Pennsylvanians as it claims.

As reported by NPR's StateImpact Pennsylvania, two former health department employees say staff were given a list of "buzzwords," such as "fracking," "Marcellus Shale" and "drilling," and instructed not to respond to health complaints containing these words but instead to refer them to the department's Bureau of Epidemiology. This practice was different from how they handled all other health issues throughout their extensive careers at the department.

Although the state health department initially denied the list existed, it has since acknowledged that it did but said it was intended only as a guide. The Bureau of Epidemiology maintains it is investigating health complaints related to fracking, but, unlike in other states, in Pennsylvania

Our state forests are rare places that provide respite and recreation for our citizens. The proposed lift on the moratorium of gas leasing will lead to further drilling that will jeopardize fragile ecosystems. Our state forests and parks should be set apart, protected and held in trust for the future.

We need your help to stop additional gas leasing of state park and forest land. We urge you to please take action by sending a message to your legislators so the General Assembly will not open the door to additional leasing.

[Click here to take action!](#)

Frack Chemical Disclosure

Request Full Disclosure of the Chemicals Used in the Fracking Process

The United States is in the midst of a rapid expansion of hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") to extract oil and gas from deep rock formations. Communities have raised concerns about the more than 750 chemicals and other components used in the drilling process.

But right now, companies can keep these chemicals a secret-along with any health and environmental effects they may have. Even when fracking-related accidents or chemical spills happen, doctors and public safety officers don't even have access to the chemical exposure information necessary to treat and protect people.

People have a right to know what chemicals are being used in their neighborhoods.

The Union of Concerned Scientists has drafted a comment form to the EPA. Click the link below & be sure to customize your comment for a stronger impact.

[Click here to take action!](#)

Fracked LNG Exports Letter

Tell President Obama to put the brakes on fracked LNG Exports.

complaints of potential fracking-related health problems are not made public.

In the face of these allegations and the fact that public information is not available about how thoroughly complaints are being investigated by the Bureau of Epidemiology, it is difficult to tell whether the Pennsylvania Department of Health is fulfilling its mission. We depend on the department to put the health of Pennsylvanians' first and base its practices on science, not politics.

This concern was heightened Tuesday when Auditor General Eugene DePasquale issued a scorching review of how another state agency, the Department of Environmental Protection, is overseeing the shale gas industry and responding to citizens' complaints that drilling has affected their drinking water.

There is certainly reason to worry about the health impacts of fracking, with mounting evidence of both water and air contamination.

The Post-Gazette revealed Tuesday that the DEP is about to report that oil and gas operations have damaged Pennsylvania water supplies 209 times since the end of 2007. A document released to the newspaper did not detail which companies were involved, what pollutants were found or why the problems occurred.

We do know that methane migration has affected groundwater and that discharge of under-treated waste has affected surface waters. Increased particulate matter and ground-level ozone have affected local triggers for asthma attacks, cardiac problems and the exacerbation of respiratory ailments.

People living in fracking areas have experienced various illnesses, and there is potential for long-term effects. We have a dynamic public health issue growing in our state, but the state health department does not seem to have adapted to meet the health needs of Pennsylvanians.

Since the department has failed to provide a public registry of fracking-related complaints, there is no way to determine whether it is adequately monitoring and investigating fracking's health effects. Additionally, unlike some other states, the commonwealth has never conducted a health impact assessment to identify the health risks for Pennsylvanians in drilling areas.

In the absence of a public registry of illnesses or considerations of risk, the health department and the shale gas industry can more easily suggest there's a lack of evidence that fracking can cause health problems. We ask the health department to publicly report complaints of potential fracking-related health problems, status reports and conclusions of complaint investigations, and recommendations made to address illnesses and prevent them in the future. [Click here to read the full article presented in the Post-Gazette.](#)

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Right now, communities across the country are facing air, water, and climate pollution at the hands of natural gas companies.

And the stakes have gotten even higher – the potential for more fracking so the natural gas industry can export liquefied natural gas (LNG) to other countries.

President Obama is only hearing one side of the story from the Department of Energy, and it favors the natural gas industry. DOE's recent study on the economics of fracked gas exports completely ignores the public health, environmental, and climate costs of an export rush.

Let's remind President Obama of all the other costs – the cost of buying drinking water because your well is polluted with fracking chemicals, lost work days because your child is sick due to respiratory problems, and increasing utility bills to heat our homes while communities are left to pay the price for fracking.

Thanks to the Sierra Club, it's easy to send a letter to our President.

[Click Here to send your letter to President Obama.](#)

Join RDA!

Sign Up/Make a Donation

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

It costs nothing to sign up for our e-newsletter or become a member of our organization, but tax-free donations are accepted & greatly appreciated.

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.

You can send a donation to the address listed at the bottom of this email, or [click here to download our current membership form](#) to fill out and send in along with your

donation.

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 Guardian.....\$100
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 Preservationist.....\$1,000

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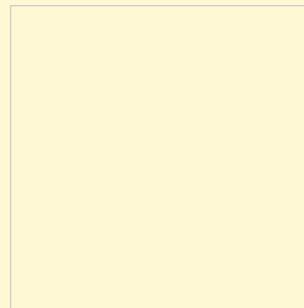
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Please note: The RDA newsletter includes reporting on a variety of events and activities, which do not necessarily reflect the philosophy of the organization. RDA practices only non-violent action in voicing the organization's beliefs and concerns.

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