

*"The good thing about science  
is that it's true  
whether or not you believe in it."*  
-Neil deGrasse Tyson,  
American astrophysicist



## **Greetings!**

It is with heavy hearts we welcome you to our second official Keep it Wild e-newsletter. Our condolences go out to those most affected by the recent flood and pipeline catastrophe.

This information is still coming to you from RDA with the intention of highlighting, protecting and promoting the economic potential of our beautiful PA Wilds while keeping you informed of current gas industry happenings, new well permits/violations, petitions, etc.

In order to create positive change, we feel the need to shift our focus from the negative aspects of what's happening with the industry to the positive side of life in our region. We hope this will be a source of encouragement to you as you help to preserve and protect what we all love and cherish about our homes, our communities and our Wilds.

The streams and creeks have broken free from their banks once again; a large portion of our landscape is forever changed following recent area flooding. [Click here to be directed to State Impact's news](#) on last weekend's pipeline rupture. Barb Jarmoska lives at the epicenter of the spill and provides photo-documentation of the tragic experience. Click the links below to be directed her stories.

*"There is no bridge over troubled waters at the confluence of Wallis Run and the Loyalsock Creek where 55,000 gallons of gasoline spilled when [the bridge blew out, taking the Sunoco pipeline with it](#). How much longer will we, as a global society, pursue this collision course with sure and certain peril? What will it take to garner the political will needed to change direction? Three presidential debates and not one question on climate change. As [local residents and agencies labor to clean up the latest damage](#), we bury more and more pipelines under more and more rivers to transport more and more fossil fuels...and all the while expecting different results. Insanity." -Barb Jarmoska, RDA Member*



Sunoco employees wearing rubber gloves and gas masks gather at the recent pipeline rupture where an estimated 55,000 gallons of gasoline spilled into the Loyalsock Creek. Air at the site remains acrid with the smell of petroleum.

Photo: Barb Jarmoska, Oct 24th

In [our headline story](#), Jim Dunn provides an excellent report on the way Act 13 impact fee money can and should be used within our communities. By understanding the law and the negative impacts of gas drilling, you can be a voice of truth and reason in your own community. Let's encourage our elected officials to spend Act 13 money for its intended purposes and where it is most needed.

New [gas well permits/violations](#) have made their way back into the feed. So while [the gas industry continues to fight regulation](#), we must keep our ever-changing environment in mind. The more protections the better, as our flood risk seems to have gone from 100/50/20 years, to more like five.

Did you know that our local Tourist Promotion Bureau has removed Lycoming County from the state-wide PA Wilds program? No longer will our hiking and biking trails, kayaking and fishing opportunities and other outdoor recreational activities be a part of the PA Wilds promotions. This decision is intimately woven in with the gas industry's presence in the Wilds and the fact that there are many questions regarding the use of millions of dollars in county-wide hotel taxes, collected and administrated by the Chamber of Commerce. Lycoming County Citizens for Hotel Tax Accountability invites you to join them in asking the County Commissioners for transparency and accountability in the handling and use of hotel tax funds. For the sake of the PA Wilds, please [sign the petition below](#) and help spread the word.

Finally, [check out highlights](#) from the wonderful state forest event held earlier this month by the Save the Loyalsock Coalition. Much gratitude to the Coalition for hosting the event. The timing was fortuitous, as now [many of the roads in the area are impassable](#).

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**Pull the Act 13 Money from the Rabbit Hole, Please**

**by Jim Dunn, RDA Member**

It's budget time again, a dreadful time of year for local government. Elected officials sharpen pencils and scratch their heads as they prepare to plan their spending. Tensions are high at public meetings and comments spin round like a tornado. Typically the same old rhetoric: "You are spending too much," and "My taxes are too high," is concluded with, "But you're not spending enough on what I want."

Sometimes intelligent, insightful discussion can help weather the storm; other times the roof gets blown off by talk radio one-liners and other anti-government jargon.

All government monies must adhere to certain rules and eligible uses, but Act 13 funding is perhaps the most specific. As the title suggests, there are 13 uses for the money, a simple concept as presented.

**That is until you go down the rabbit hole.**

This happens when people seek to manipulate the interpretation of the funding's eligibility to support projects not consistent with the intent or the spirit of the funding. The rabbit hole, a fantasy land where logic is fiction and rhetoric is reputed as fact, is a cold dark place where frightened politicians go to find solutions to satisfy their cronies and political contributors. Hard to tell if it's fear or anxiety driving the need to answer the nonsensical one-liners with policy proposals.

When politicians propose spending plans that are inconsistent with the intent of the funds, it's a sure sign they are looking for the rabbit hole. Ignoring guidance found in comprehensive planning documents and through professional service advisors is another tell-tale sign of flight. The rabbit hole is a comfortable place to hide during budget discussions.

**Can Act 13 funding be the carrot to bring the bunnies out into the light?**

We know there are many eligible uses, but what is the purpose of Act 13 funding? According to the Public Utility Commission the purpose is "to cover the local impacts of drilling." That seems rather simple -- money to help ease the pain of having oil and gas in your community.

So where does most of the impact occur?

If you ask me, I'd have to say "In the forest, of course. That is where most of the wells are drilled." That's simple. "Some money for the forest, please."

**How do the Commonwealth's citizens use the forest?**

Recreational activities like hiking, biking, birding, hunting and fishing. This is too easy -- money for the birds and the bees, the flowers and the trees.

Not so fast, industry advocates and political "Yes" men may scoff.

Be assured, citizens and state agencies are concerned with the environmental impacts of shale gas development within PA's forested biome; it's not just me thinking that way. The Commonwealth's Bureau of Forestry developed a Gas Management Team (GMT) to manage many issues evolving around the industrial impacts within our forest. The GMT recognizes public concern about forest impacts, or conversion.

GMT policy states, "This conversion directly affects forestland by increasing habitat fragmentation and reducing the overall amount of forest cover. Construction activities could impact plants, animals and their habitat (wetlands included), forest-interior bird

species, and species of concern such as timber rattlesnakes, bats, Allegheny woodrats and an array of native species." Meanwhile, scenic vistas and view sheds are disappearing to oil and gas development.

It's obvious the forest has taken it tough, but what about people?

## Who has been squeezed, thrown under the bus?

Renters, especially low income families. During the shale boom the high demand and short supply for housing priced many individuals and families out of their homes. In 2012, Lycoming County released the "Marcellus Shale Impact Studies," and one of the documents focused on housing. The following summary was included in that study: "[T]he rate for a 3-bedroom dwelling averages around \$1,166 per month. These figures suggest that households with incomes under \$35,000 could not afford to rent the average 3-bedroom dwelling."

That's very troubling, considering that 40 percent of Lycoming County households have a total annual income of less than \$35,000. Seeing that almost half of the county residents can not afford the average rent, it's fair to say that affordable housing has also been negatively impacted by the gas boom.

## In conclusion, a brief suggestion on impact fee usage.

Initially we should direct the bulk of the funding to mitigation of eligible direct impacts. Unfortunately, not all impacted areas are eligible for this form of mitigation funding, so let's start with what is eligible:

1. **Housing.** Two recommendations from [The Impacts of the Marcellus Shale Industry on Housing in Lycoming County](#) follow: One recommendation is to "Provide incentives for home ownership, perhaps in partnership with local banks." Another recommendation utilizes grant programs: "Fully explore PA Housing Finance Agency-funded programs enhanced by Act 13 funding (into the Rehabilitation Enhancement Program account especially) to meet the housing needs of low-moderate income, disabled, and elderly residents."

2. **State Forests.** The other eligible area of focus is the negative impact to the forests' vast natural beauty and recreational resources. Impact fee money could be used in partnership with DCNR to buy back severed rights or entire lease tracts.

The impact to recreational tourism in North Central Pennsylvania is described in the [Shale Gas Monitoring Report](#): "In addition to environmental concerns, shale-gas development could alter the character of north-central Pennsylvania, an area known as the 'Pennsylvania Wilds,' that abounds with scenic beauty and outdoor recreational opportunities." Tourism is the second-largest industry in the Commonwealth and recreational tourism is Pennsylvania's fastest growing sector.

## What do visitors to our forests have to say about these impacts?

They are **not happy**, and 46 out of 116 comment card respondents indicated that gas drilling changed their visitor experience and recreational use of the forest.

So we must use the Act 13 monies for what they are intended: "to cover the local impacts of drilling."

By the time you read this, many municipal budgets will already be proposed and a preliminary budget available for public view and comment. See your borough, township or city office to look at the proposed and previous year's spending of Act 13 funds. You may be shocked and angry with the results.

I'm not opposed to the [airport project](#) or the 911 center monies that have been spent or proposed. These are good projects, but they are not the way the Act 13 money was intended to be used. These projects have not been negatively impacted by oil and gas extraction.

The recreational use  
of our forest  
**HAS**  
been impacted and  
**NOT**  
mitigated.

Speak up and tell your municipal decision makers that you want Act 13 monies used legally as intended and to improve what matters most.

[This piece has been trimmed for email.](#)  
[Click here to view the full article.](#)

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## Lycoming County Gas Well Permits/Violations

The following permits/violations have been issued since our last publication:

Cogan House Township

[Flicks Run 12H](#) - SWN Production Co - Permit Renewal

Eldred Township

[Bush Hill Bennett 1H](#) - Inflection Energy - New Permit

Hepburn Township

[Walters Gamble 42H 51714](#) - Seneca Resources - Permit Renewal

[Walters Gamble 44H 51716](#) - Seneca Resources - New Permit

Jackson Township

[Permit Violation](#) - Range Resources - *Operator reported a >5 gallon release of reuse water (produced water, flowback) through failed patches in containment. Area was vacced and scraped; followup by inspector found elevated conductance still prevailed in this area.*

Upper Fairfield Township

[Hamilton P1](#) - Inflection Energy - New Permit

And finally, some good news for Potter County Residents: [DEP Fines JKLM Energy \\$472,317 for a 2015 Surfactant Discharge that Contaminated Six Water Wells.](#)

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## Where Does Our Tax Money Go?

A bipartisan group known as the LYCOMING COUNTY CITIZENS FOR HOTEL TAX ACCOUNTABILITY is concerned about the lack of transparency and accountability in the use of millions of dollars generated through hotel tax. These public funds are paid by hotel customers.



**If you agree that it is time for transparency in the use of our hotel tax, we invite you to sign on to a letter asking the Lycoming County Commissioners to hold the Chamber of Commerce accountable for appropriate use of this public tax money. Please SIGN ON at the link below.**

[Click here to sign the request.](#)

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## A Better Path Forward

Although it wasn't a beautifully crisp fall day for the [Save the Loyalsock Coalition's](#) outing on October 2, attendees still enjoyed a good day in the woods.

The event began in historic Masten, a former logging town that boomed in the early 1900's (during the reign of the lumber industry) only to become a ghost town after the forest was cleared. Brief presentations on drilling impacts and efforts for stream maintenance and restoration in the Clarence Moore lands were followed by just under a four-mile hike on the Old Logger's Path. Different tree species, freshwater springs and nearby bogs were pointed out as hikers walked remnants of old logging roads and rail beds that make up the trail.

The misty day gave a lovely freshly-washed appearance to the forest and provided a bumper crop of edible mushrooms (as we learned from one of the hikers). In all, everyone enjoyed this day in the Loyalsock State Forest and left with a better understanding of what could be lost once again if the Clarence Moore lands are developed by the natural gas industry.



Please [click here to enjoy more images](#) from *A Better Path Forward*, and thank you to all who made this great outing possible.

-Ann Pinca  
Communications Coordinator  
Save the Loyalsock Coalition

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