



Workmen at pipeline rupture site (note the mud covered tree line) - Photo credit: Norman and Sheila Lunger

## Greetings!

It's been quite a month of Marcellus madness thus far. Throughout Pennsylvania, a number of folks living atop the shale and in proximity to gas industry activities are paying the price of gas development with their sense of place, quality of life, water woes, increasingly polluted air, truck-filled roads, and diminishing property values. For the latest news on undrinkable water, Range Resources will cough up \$8.9 million for its ongoing pollution of drinking water, streams, and a pond - [click here to read more.](#)

RDA members Norm and Sheila Lunger live in eastern Lycoming County near the site of the recent pipeline rupture. You'll get a first-hand look at the event through their eyes in this week's feature article.

About 60 people who love the Loyalsock Creek and see this Exceptional Value waterway as a crucial part of their lives showed up to express concern and remorse to SRBC over Chief Energy's plans to withdraw 2 million gallons of creek water daily at Forksville. I was among those who spoke, and offer a review of the proceedings in the second story.

RDA friend and research writer Dory Hippauf looks inside the EPA water quality report issued on June 4th. You've probably seen variations on mainstream media's headlines proclaiming, "Fracking doesn't harm drinking water." What's the real deal? Read Dory's report and decide for yourself.

The Williams-Transco pipeline that ruptured here in Lycoming County was far from an isolated incident. The sidebar's "In Other News" leads off with a series of stories that reveal the dangers of pipelines. Keep in mind as you read, that Governor Wolf wants to build an additional 30,000 miles of pipelines here in PA over the next few years.

There's a lot to learn in this issue. We hope you'll take the time to read what we have presented, forward the newsletter on to friends and family, and share it on Facebook.

## In This Issue

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## In Other News

**As shown by the articles below, the Lunger's story is just one among many gas industry accidents and emergency events that have been happening all too frequently over a long period of time; some have led to costly property and other damages, even death.**

### Pipeline Explosions since 2001

This only covers Texas incidents from 2001 - 2012 but contains this telling paragraph:

Those "significant incidents" in Texas accounted for 1,669 incidents (21.5% of incidents nationwide), 78 fatalities (14.6% of all deaths nationwide), 371 injuries (15.7% of all injuries nationwide) and property

We would also be delighted to welcome you as a more active member of RDA. Our Working Group meets once or twice a month on Wednesday evenings at 5:30 at the Herdic House in Williamsport, where the owners generously provide us with a meeting room. If you'd like to attend, send me an email [<barbjarmoska@verizon.net>](mailto:barbjarmoska@verizon.net) and I'll fill you in on details of Working Group activities and opportunities.

In solidarity,

Barb Jarmoska  
RDA Board of Directors

Visit our website at: [www.rdapa.org](http://www.rdapa.org)

## Pipeline Blast Rocks Countryside

by Sheila and Norman Lunger, RDA Members

When a gas pipeline blows, it shatters the air with the roar of a jet engine at 20 paces. But this is a jet engine that doesn't race down a runway or soar into the air. It stays put and roars and roars until the hills quake and the leaves shake.

Such a roar blasted the evening quiet around our home in rural Jordan Township at the eastern end of Lycoming County at 9:33 p.m. Tuesday, June 9. We thought it was a tornado at first. We rushed to the cellar and covered there for a few minutes. As the deep rumbling noise continued unabated, we emerged to take a cautious look outside. Wouldn't a tornado have moved closer, or farther away? But if it wasn't a tornado, what was it?

A call to the county's 911 number brought the news that the Williams-Transco interstate pipeline that runs east-west a mile south of our home had blown out. The company was aware of the problem and working to tame the escaping gas. The site of the break was near Bradley Road, about a mile and a quarter to our southeast.

Was the escaping gas burning? A worried survey of the horizon showed no red ball, no glow, no sign of fire. So there had been no explosion, just gas escaping under immense pressure. The rumbling roar went on for almost 45 minutes, the time it took for all the gas between pipeline valves, spaced about 20 miles apart, to escape. Sheila called Williams Pipeline's local office, where a rep told her that the western valve was near Picture Rocks and the eastern valve was just over the line in Columbia County.

Shortly before 11 p.m., about 45 minutes after the roar had died down, fire fighters in fireproof coats and hard hats arrived at our house and asked us to evacuate to the Unityville fire hall until safety could be assured. The escaping gas had soared upwards into the atmosphere (adding to the planet's greenhouse gas burden), but the heavier mercaptan, an odorizing chemical that is mixed with methane to produce a "gassy" smell, had lingered. We felt safe enough to stay put, but many people whose homes were closer to the rupture did evacuate to the Unityville or Benton fire halls. A short time later, the evacuation call was withdrawn.

Because Transco is an interstate pipeline, federal investigators were on the scene within hours. The investigative agency is known by its acronym, PHMSA (pronounced FIM-suh), the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, part of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The Transco line in Lycoming County dates to the 1960s and comprises three parallel lines within a single right-of-way. The line that ruptured was 24

damage of about \$668 Million (9.9% of all damages nationwide), numbers which are staggering considering that natural gas production takes place in at least 34 states and its use is found in all states.

Improper monitoring and maintenance of pipelines is the primary cause of these incidents according to safety reports filed with PHMSA and various state agencies, the Railroad Commission of Texas in cases within the State of Texas.

[Click here to read more.](#)

### Fracking Blowout in Texas Causes Huge Dead Zone

June 11, 2015 - The same week that Texas Governor Greg Abbott signed a bill stripping local communities of their ability to control the oil and gas industry, a fracking well exploded in south Texas, spraying a toxic mix of chemicals and forcing the evacuation of 20 families.

This is the second blowout in this county in one week.

[Click here to read more.](#)

### Natural Gas Leaks are Dangerous and Exacerbate Climate Change

June 9, 2015 - 12.8 billion cubic feet. That's how much natural gas has been released since 2010 in nearly 700 "incidents" reported to the federal [Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration](#) that occurred in the nation's natural gas gathering and transmission systems.

Another 36 million cubic feet of natural gas escaped during incidents from the distribution systems that deliver gas to homes and businesses during that time. Added up, it's enough gas to heat more than 170,000 homes for a year.

[Click here to read more.](#)

inches in diameter. A spokesman for Williams said the ruptured line was composed of carbon steel and was 50 years old (installed in 1964). Its most recent inspection was in 2010. Inspections are conducted using a device known as a "pig" that travels through the pipe and measures the width of the pipe walls, examines the stability of its welds and determines whether the pipe is still round or has become misshapen.

Aerial photos published by Bloomsburg's Press Enterprise newspaper Thursday morning showed a long gash in the earth and a pipe whose surface had been peeled back for several feet. Trees along either side of the cleared right-of-way were brown with the mud that was blown out of the trench by the rupture.

After the blast, we drove along Bradley Road, which was lined with trucks and hard-hatted workers at the pipeline crossing. We spoke to a security guard who said workers had found the vaporized remnants of deer killed in the outburst. Up a slope to the east, the muddy trees were easily visible. A large crane or backhoe had been brought in to dig out the damaged pipe and uncover the two adjacent lines for inspection.



Closeup of the Transco pipeline blowout - Photo credit: Anonymous

A PHMSA spokesman told Sheila that investigators would gather up all the metal fragments and other debris they could find and test them to determine what caused the blowout. They will also examine Williams's records about maintenance and the testing of its lines. An investigation usually takes several months to more than a year, and when it is completed the report is publicly available on the PHMSA web site.

Two Williams spokesmen visited homes in the area the day after the blowout. They emphasized to us that interstate pipelines are regulated by the federal government and said pipeline integrity is guaranteed by detailed standards about materials, testing, and so on. However, federal and state regulations prescribe laxer standards for rural areas than for populated areas. For example, rural (Class 1) pipelines:

- (a) are tested to lower levels of pressure;
- (b) are permitted to have fewer welds tested;
- (c) need not be buried so deep;
- (d) can have their shut-off valves farther apart.

Most of the new pipelines in north central Pennsylvania are Class 1 gathering

## Evacuation Order Over After Pipeline Rupture in Berrien County

September, 2014 - Benton Charter Twp., Michigan - After a long day of waiting, 500 people from rural Berrien County, evacuated after a gas pipeline ruptured, were allowed back into their homes.

Rogers says Trans Canada, the company that owns the pipeline, has advised him that his three acres of potatoes around the explosion may be contaminated and should not be harvested.

[Click here to read more.](#)

## Natural Gas Pipeline Rupture and Fire

(incident from 2000 which highlights the problem of older, corroded pipelines prevalent in so many areas)

At 5:26 a.m., mountain daylight time, on Saturday, August 19, 2000, a 30-inch-diameter natural gas transmission pipeline operated by El Paso Natural Gas Company ruptured adjacent to the Pecos River near Carlsbad, New Mexico. The released gas ignited and burned for 55 minutes.

Twelve persons who were camping under a concrete-decked steel bridge that supported the pipeline across the river were killed and their three vehicles destroyed. Two nearby steel suspension bridges for gas pipelines crossing the river were extensively damaged. According to El Paso Natural Gas Company, property and other damages or losses totaled \$998,296.

[Click here to read more.](#)

## Pipeline Safety Tracker

From November, 2012 - check out the chart showing oil and gas pipeline fatalities and damage. Over 400 people have died and damages are in the billions.

[Click here to read more.](#)

lines that link gas pads to compressor stations. The safety of Class 1 pipelines in Pennsylvania is not subject to regulation by any authority - a major oversight. However, Pennsylvania law requires the Public Utility Commission to maintain a registry of the location, length, and diameter of all gas pipelines, including Class 1, listing their pressures and the companies that operate them.

Enthusiasts of natural gas development in Pennsylvania stress that, when the Williams-Transco pipeline blew out, "the system worked." Valves shut off the flow of gas in the line. Early responders from local fire companies helped to divert traffic on nearby roads and highways (State Routes 118 and 239) and advised residents to evacuate. No one was killed or even injured

Yet for families subjected to the fright of the blast and the prolonged roar of escaping gas, for those children and adults who evacuated to fire halls and lost several hours of sleep, the incident seemed anything but reassuring. At the very least it demonstrated that, whatever precautions the industry takes, "stuff happens." Each incident degrades the quality of life in our area a little more.

## Mission Impossible? SRBC's Balancing Act

by Barb Jarmoska, RDA Board of Directors



Security - Photo credit: Barb Jarmoska

We were allowed to keep our shoes on. Otherwise, standing in line to enter the Plunkett's Creek Fire Hall for SRBC's informational meeting on Chief's proposed water withdrawal was akin to passing through an airport security. Attendees were greeted by 3 security guards, asked to put cell phones, keys, and miscellaneous pocket contents in a tray, open up bags and purses for inspection, show photo ID, and stand with outstretched arms to undergo a body scan with a metal-

detecting device. There was a drenching rain in the evening of June 8th; the line in the security-enhanced foyer backed up to the roofless sidewalk; folks without umbrellas could have wrung water from their shirts by the time they got to their seats.

Shortly after the meeting began at 7 pm, I counted 64 people in the room, sans SRBC staff and including 3 or 4 industry reps. Three hours later, as the meeting ended, many folks had heard enough, spoken their piece, and cleared out.

SRBC staff opened the proceedings with a slide presentation about the agency's mission and Chief Energy's application to withdraw 2 million gallons of water per day from the Loyalsock Creek at Forksville. The take-away from this portion of the meeting was the fact that there is no prohibition against this consumptive use in the existing regulations, and that, in making their decision whether to grant or deny this permit, SRBC must seek to balance "protection" with "development". Mission impossible? Many in attendance believed so.

### Look Out Below: Danger Lurks Underground from Aging Gas Pipes

(2014) About every other day over the past decade, a gas leak in the United States has destroyed property, hurt someone or killed someone, a USA TODAY Network investigation finds. The most destructive blasts have killed at least 135 people, injured 600 and caused \$2 billion in damages since 2004.

The gas leaks that fueled those blasts are not uncommon. Neither is the cast-iron pipe - some of it more than a century old - that is the chief suspect in each of those three explosions and many others, according to the investigation by USA TODAY and affiliated newspapers and TV stations across the country.

A review of federal data shows there are tens of thousands of miles of cast-iron and bare-steel gas mains lurking beneath American cities and towns - despite these pipes being a longtime target of National Transportation Safety Board accident investigators.

[Click here to read more.](#)

### A Special 4-Part Series on "Battle Lines" from the Philadelphia Inquirer

by Joseph Tanfani and Craig R McCoy, Philadelphia Inquirer

December, 2011 - This series consists of the following articles "Powerful Pipes, Weak Oversight;" "Similar Pipes, Different Rules," "Us vs. Them in PA Gaslands," and "Special Report, Aging Pipes, Deadly Hazards."

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Many concerned citizens attended - Photo credit: Barb Jarmoska

When a floor microphone was opened for questions and comments from the public, a security guard was stationed not less than 5 feet away. A line formed, and folks took turns speaking for over 2 hours, some with passion and emotion, all but one beseeching SRBC to deny this water withdrawal application. Reasons given included:

- **Lost income.** Locals who make their living in and around Forksville explained to SRBC staff that visitors passing through this quaint village (that serves as a doorway to World's End State Park) would no longer flock to the region if the withdrawal is built and upwards of 500 trucks per day are going in and out of the site 24/7.
- **Lost quality of life and sense of place.** If the once-quiet and peaceful village is infused with the fumes and bombarded with the noise of this industrial site, the treasured rural lifestyle will be lost. One man who owns property 500 feet from the proposed site asked the audience, "Does anybody here want to buy a cabin?" There were no takers.
- **Lost water quality and inadequate stream preservation.** Many people spoke on this topic, stating a variety of concerns that included stream ecology as well as fishing and recreational opportunities. The Loyalsock Creek is designated Exceptional Value (EV), and SRBC openly admitted that there is presently no data available to allow the agency to establish an acceptable standard of loss of aquatic resources. "This is new. It hasn't happened yet. I can't say," one of the 3 SRBC staff members in attendance told the questioner.
- **Loss of "Common Wealth".** In reminding SRBC that the Loyalsock Creek belongs to the people of PA and not to the gas industry that wants to withdraw this water, one woman proclaimed her intention to stand in the creek and be hauled off to jail before she would succumb to allowing Chief to suck out its per diem 2 million gallons.
- **Lack of big picture and future-oriented planning.** Again, this was a common theme among those who offered comments. The reductionist thinking by elected officials and government regulators was exposed, as folks exposed the fact that providing these millions of gallons of water to the gas industry opened the door to additional fragmented forests, erosion, invasive species, roads, gathering lines, pipelines, well pads, compressor stations, and of course...trucks.

Aquatic biologist Harvey Katz reminded SRBC that the manual the agency uses for deciding on water withdrawal permits deliberately avoids overview and big picture implications. By Katz's calculations, based on SRBC's December 2014 Comprehensive Report, the gas industry has already received permits to withdraw 90 billion gallons from PA waterways. The SRBC would argue that 90 billion gallons is a minute amount compared to the total gallonage flowing down the Susquehanna River. Katz reminded us that the fraction of total flow does not mean that this water is unimportant. On the contrary, a small percentage of consumptive water may have a profound influence on fish and aquatic biota. The all-inclusive impacts of an increasing number of water withdrawals fall under the heading of "instream flow needs", a complex science of which SRBC and other regulators have very little understanding.

donations are accepted & greatly appreciated.

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Current methods of piecemeal, one-project-only analysis, also employed by DEP and other state regulating agencies, will no doubt be seen by history as foundational to the second undoing of Pennsylvania's forests and streams.

SRBC will continue to accept comments on Chief Energy's water withdrawal application until August 15th. It's not too late to make your voice heard.

What does the Loyalsock Creek mean to you, and why is it worthy of protection? [Click here to submit a comment.](#)

## EPA 2015 Fracking Report: Beyond the Headlines

by Dory Hippauf

June 16, 2015 - If you have been following the issue of "fracking" for fossil fuels, you were probably waiting for the release of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) report. On June 4, 2015, the EPA released its assessment of the risks to water by fracking.

Instead of clearing things up, the EPA conclusions were muddled by misleading media headlines and corporate PR.

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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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