



Farmland south of this gas well pad in Upper Fairfield Twp is the future home of a 24/7 compressed natural gas station. Dubbed a "portable pipeline," over 200 tank trucks per day will enter, fill up & exit onto Rt 87.

Greetings!

The New Year is here and so is the Lycoming County gas rush. Industrial activity is flooding the landscape; in this issue, we bring you stories from four Lycoming County Townships.

First, a local resident shares her experience with a gas lease, and sends out a warning to anyone still considering leasing their land.

Next, RDA's Harvey Katz discusses Upper Fairfield Township's planned CNG facility. The facility was approved through seemingly illegal "spot zoning" practices, despite public opposition and all the while ignoring zoning regulations meant to protect prime farmland.

RDA President Jim Slotterback wrote about his experience with the strong-arm tactics used by Inflection Energy at a recent hearing in Hepburn Township. His story, originally posted on the Earthjustice blog, is re-published here. With the cards clearly stacked against sustainability and the precautionary principle, Jim tells why "Sometimes hope is all we have."

Another RDA member, also a Hepburn Township resident, accepted RDA's newsletter invitation to visit the Yeagle Road gas well site to witness the operation first-hand. Her experience closes this issue.

"In Other News" highlights 2014 fracking bans, another planned pipeline, an LNG terminal put on hold due to low oil prices, and an interesting comment from a nuclear energy company president attributing the recent VT plant shut down to the natural gas industry. New "Events/Action Points" are also listed in the sidebar.

The New Year is sure to bring abundant opportunities to participate in local democracy and take a stand for the natural beauty of our state. Your RDA membership & activism is greatly appreciated. If you have not already done so, please join RDA. [Click here to donate via PayPal](#). With as little as a \$5

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In Other News

2014 - The Year of the Ban

Fracking bans sweep across North America, and that was just the month of December.

A steady uptick in citizen activism, and a broadening awareness of hydraulic fracturing's negative impact on everything from climate to wildlife to water, resulted in

donation, you are counted among those whose membership dues allow RDA to continue this crucial work.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

RDA is wishing all of our fellow citizens a happy, healthy & prosperous New Year ahead. May we all experience a sense of rejuvenation as we continue to work together to keep our dialogue fresh & to make sure the truth is told.

Sincerely,

Brooke Woodside

Managing Editor

Visit our website at: www.rdapa.org

Lease Regrets

by Kelly, Shrewsbury Township resident

This is for all the people out there who are just waiting for the gas wells to go in so they can start collecting big bucks. Well, let me tell you a little about the big bucks.

We live in Lycoming County, on 43 acres. We were first offered \$2 an acre to allow the gas company to "explore" our land. Next, they told us that there was gas under our land and that we would be able to collect royalties. They said we could see almost \$1000 per acre in royalties that would last up to 50 years. $\$1,000 \times 43 \times 50 =$ over 2 million! That sounded great! We thought we were going to be rich, and never have to worry about money again.

We were in a hurry to get the money so we were in a hurry to sign the lease as quickly as possible, in spite of the fact that the contract was really long and confusing and full of big words. We signed a lease for 10 years, but didn't realize they could automatically renew it for another 5 years, which they did.

After the first 10 years, we wanted out. The company we signed with had changed hands three times, cleared 3 miles of old growth trees, dug up our land, put in 3 wells and a pipeline, and ruined our roads. The traffic was awful: big, loud diesel trucks running up and down our roads all day and night. Trucks also leaked contaminated fluids into the nearby creek.

It's been 15 years since we signed. Now, they've shut down all the wells around us because they aren't producing. We spent money on a lawyer (trying to get out of the lease) and more money on tires and alignments for our vehicles because of the potholes and road conditions. We lost many of our trees, and the wildlife we used to have here is nearly all gone. Our lawyer told us we should continue to have our drinking water tested several times a year to make sure it's safe to drink, and those tests are expensive.

And where's all the royalty money they said we would receive? There is none! We are left with abandoned wells, no royalty money, and the land all but destroyed. They promised they would restore the land and put it back the way it was, but we haven't seen a single tree replanted. I'm 42 years old, I'll be six feet under before the land ever looks like it did before the gas company showed up.

I hope this helps some of you who are eager to sign and see the money start to roll in. Maybe you'll be one of the lucky ones to receive royalties, but you need to know that you're sacrificing your water, your land, your animals, and your health - and nothing will be the same for the rest of your life. So think before you sign. We learned the hard way: the gas industry makes promises it can't

successful anti-fracking measures on ballots across North America in 2014. Then, last week, the state of New York banned it. They're not the first, Vermont holds that distinction, yet they are the first state with significant shale gas reserves to do so. People are pumped.

[Click to read the full article.](#)

UGI Plans \$150 million NG Pipeline

UGI Energy Services announced today it plans to construct a new 35-mile, 20-inch gas pipeline through north-central PA. The so-called Sunbury Pipeline would begin in Lycoming County and end at a proposed natural gas-fired power plant near Shamokin Dam, in Snyder County.

This announcement comes amid a flurry of other pipeline projects in Pennsylvania, as energy companies work to move the abundant Marcellus Shale gas to new markets.

[Click to read the full article.](#)

Oil Price crash claims first U.S. LNG project casualty

Excelerate Energy's Texan liquefied natural gas terminal plan has become the first victim of an oil price slump threatening the economics of U.S. LNG export projects.

[Click to read the full story.](#)

Vermont Yankee nuclear plant winds down operations

Bill Mohl, the president of Entergy Wholesale Commodities, said economic factors, especially related to the natural gas market in the Northeast, were the primary reason for the shutdown.

"The Northeast has undergone a shift in supply because of shale gas, resulting in sustained low natural gas prices and low wholesale energy prices," Mohl said in a statement.

The plant closing is having a major negative economic impact on the three-state region.

CNG 24/7 at Gateway to PA Wilds

by Harvey Katz, RDA Working Group member, retired college professor of aquatic ecology

In early June 2014, Compass Natural Gas Partners, L.P. (CNG) requested that the Upper Fairfield Township Board of Supervisors (UFFT-BOS) allow the building of a commercial operation. The requested location was on Route 87 across the street from Thanksgiving Lane immediately south of the Community Baptist Church. The land is zoned Suburban Residential (SR), thus designated for low and moderate density development. Commercial activities which would interfere with this purpose are discouraged. After a review by the UFFT Planning Commission, the application was denied.

In August, CNG resubmitted their plans to build a commercial operation on the above site. They requested a conditional use (CU) hearing and included a request for a "Curative Amendment" (CA). They claimed that UFFT did not zone for commercial use and that the Township had banned a legitimate use and therefore didn't allow for a legitimate use. The request for a CA would address this legitimate use. (Note that UFFT does zone for commercial use in the Village Center.) UFFT-BOS agreed to hold the conditional use hearings. These were held on Sep 30th, Oct 7th, 27th and Nov 18th.

Nearly 60 locals (70% of them residents of UFFT and 30% from adjacent townships) attended the CU hearings. Approximately eight hours of testimony and questions were made/asked during the first three CU sessions. The usual questions regarding traffic, noise, odors, safety and view issues were covered in great detail. All of CNG's comments were based on plans, conjecture and promises. CNG explained that a facility like they were proposing had not been built anywhere in the United States. A facility was constructed in Canada. Several residents pointed out that the UFFT ordinances required that the health, safety and welfare of the residents be protected. They also pointed out that the ordinance required the Township to protect its prime farmland. It was also pointed out that changing zoning through "Spot Zoning" was illegal as explained in the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (PMPC), which serves as the legal guide for townships to write ordinances.

It was pointed out in great detail that residents had made major investments in their land and homes and that this investment needed to be protected. In addition, it was also noted that Route 87 is the southeast entrance into the PA Wilds, land owned by the citizens of the Commonwealth and considered to be a major recreational gem as well as providing thousands of jobs. Diminishing this PA Wilds resource, and the jobs that are dependent on it, will devalue the resource. In addition, Lycoming County had designated the area between Montoursville and the Lycoming Mall as the major development zone. Route 87 was not included in this long range development plan.

On Nov 18th, the UFFT-BOS approved, with conditions, the commercial use of 6.4 acres of prime farmland for CNG to build the facility. The bulk of conditions were essentially cosmetic and lacked serious attempts to protect the Township residents, the people who use Route 87, and the PA Wilds. In addition, the recommendation by the Lycoming County Planning Commission against commercialization of Route 87 was ignored.

According to a CNG survey taken when schools were not in session (hence lower traffic), Route 87 currently has 10,000 vehicle trips daily. CNG announced they will initially add 144 and later on 240 additional tractor-trailer truck trips daily to the existing 10,000. What this 10,240 vehicle trips/day will mean for vehicle accidents and deaths as well as the future need for expensive traffic lights is unknown.

The plant employed more than 600 people when it announced Aug. 27, 2013 it would close.

[Click to read the full article.](#)

Attend Tom Wolf's Swearing-In Ceremony

Harrisburg, PA

January 20, 2015, 12 -1 pm

Come witness the swearing-in of the 47th Governor of Pennsylvania. Admission is free, but tickets are required.

[Click here for more information & to claim your free tickets.](#)

Protect Our Public Lands from Fracking

Representative Mark Pocan (WI-2) recently introduced a bill to ban fracking on all public lands - the strongest piece of federal legislation against fracking to date. Fracking on public lands means clear-cutting forests for well pads, air pollution, potential water contamination and thousands of trucks carrying water, toxic chemicals and waste.

Our US parks and national forests are irreplaceable. Not only do they provide beautiful recreational areas and essential wildlife habitat, they also protect critical drinking water sources.

[Click here to sign a petition asking your Representative to support a ban on fracking on public lands.](#) We'll deliver your signature and additional message directly to your elected official.

Wolf - Agree to Public Herald Interview

Journalist and documentary filmmaker Melissa Troutman is on a mission to sit down with Pennsylvania Governor-elect Tom Wolf to discuss issues with fracking uncovered by investigative news nonprofit Public Herald.

In addition to the CNG facility, 10.3 acres of prime farmland were lost so that the Community Baptist Church could be built. Another 7.2 acres of prime farmland were lost for the Inflection Energy Ultimate Warrior Natural Gas Drilling Pad and its basin. Between these three activities, the Township has lost 23.9 acres of prime farmland in just the past few years. This is contrary to the Township's ordinances.

To sum up, the UFFT-BOS have placed a hardship on local residents by increasing traffic on Route 87, they have lost invaluable and irreplaceable prime farmland. They are allowing a scar to be established on a major entrance to the PA Wilds. They have ignored the recommendation by the Lycoming County Planning Commission to put development elsewhere, and they have, by legal chicanery, allowed "Spot Zoning." It is reasonable to expect that real estate values will decline for those homes near the CNG location. Only when these homes are put up for sale will we know the true dollar real estate loss.

It is worth asking what the outcome might have been had residents of UFFT been more vocal and involved in their local government prior to this CNG permit application. The UFFT- BOS meets twice monthly, and local residents have provided little to no oversight on the activities and decisions made by the three elected supervisors. This decision to allow the CNG facility was clearly made in opposition to the position of residents who attended the hearings.

Once again, we see local residents, via their township supervisors, strong-armed by the industry. What will it take to turn the tide and revive the democratic process at the local level?

Sometimes hope is all we have

by Jim Slotterback, President, RDA Board of Directors

Sometimes hope is all we have. We can plan, organize, research and prepare all we want. Then comes the moment of truth we have to reckon with.



My wife, Jen, and I live in Hepburn Township, Lycoming County. We have been active on the issue of gas drilling since October, 2010, when Jen found survey stakes on one of her favorite trails at Rider Park. We've been speaking up for our communities and special places ever since. We joined the Responsible Drilling Alliance and now serve on the Board of Directors.

As regular citizens go, we are well-informed about the gas industry and its practices. Up until 2010, much of the gas activity had happened to the north and east of our home, but every day it crept closer. As the drilling approached, we met with experts in areas such as chemical safety, air quality, environmental engineering, safety and health to learn more about gas drilling and its dangers.

On November 7, 2014, Inflection Energy filed for a conditional use permit to drill the first gas wells in Hepburn Township, less than one mile from our house. On December 13, we spent eight hours and forty-five minutes at the conditional use hearing. It was grueling.

We arrived at the meeting with a lawyer, a chemical safety engineer to discuss air quality issues, a biologist, members of the RDA Board and Working Group, health and safety professionals, and neighbors that we had met after going door to door to gain an understanding of their concerns and educate them on their rights as citizens.

Unfortunately, we did not have experts on land use matters or health effects who could testify on our behalf. I know that we are luckier than most to have

Public Herald reached out to Wolf several times during his campaign and post-election win, with no reply. Troutman and her partner Joshua Pribanic have investigated the impacts from fracking in Pennsylvania since 2011 and have released over 30 reports about water contamination, health issues, property rights, community rights, and government-industry corroboration at PublicHerald.org. Their documentary [Triple Divide](#), released in 2013, details the experience of fracking's impacts in Pennsylvania and the lack of accountability.

Troutman wants to sit down with Wolf to talk about new Public Herald reports about fracking in Pennsylvania, justice for those who've already been harmed, constitutional rights, and whether the governor-elect supports the study of health impacts in the state.

[Click here for more information & to sign the petition.](#)

Governor-elect Wolf: Follow NY's Lead & Ban Fracking Now

Huge victory - the state of New York banned fracking!

This victory came after years of education, mobilization and advocacy work done by Food & Water Watch as a co-founding member of New Yorkers Against Fracking, and the strong network of allies and grassroots activists in New York.

This hard-won victory shows that we win when we bring people together to build political power.

After activists demanded that New York study the health effects of fracking, a two-year investigation by the state's own commission confirmed what the movement has been saying all along, that fracking cannot be done safely.

New York has set an example that the rest of the country should follow to make sure that families in every state are protected from fracking.

[Click here to send a message to your governor to ban fracking now.](#)

so many resources available to us in such a small rural community such as this. But, I don't know if any of it will make a difference.

What transpired at the meeting were classic industry shenanigans that I had only read about up until then.

First, Inflection's attorney showed a map with Inflection's idea of who would "have standing to speak as a party" based upon a circle drawn with a pre-determined radius. She asked that anyone outside of the circle be automatically disqualified as a party. The supervisors obliged. This action eliminated a few of our neighbors, but most of them were within the radius so they were able to participate.

Then Inflection testified that it was in the business of selling gas, "not drilling for gas," and characterized drilling and fracking unconventional gas wells as mere "construction" activity, like building an addition on one's home. Much of the testimony that Inflection presented was in the form of self-serving opinions, but when citizens cross-examined on this testimony, Inflection argued that the questions were irrelevant because the hearing was on a land use matter.

Residents who spoke were cross-examined by Inflection's lawyers to show they were not "experts" in land use law or gas drilling, as if that had anything to do with whether they would be affected by drilling and fracking in the middle of their neighborhood.

Our frustration and disappointment with the process actually began before the hearing, when township officials directed us to an outdated version of the township's zoning ordinance that did not contain extensive oil-and-gas-related amendments that were passed in 2011. At a township meeting last October, I asked for the latest copy of the township ordinances and was directed to Hepburn Township's website to get the latest amendments. Jen carefully reviewed the zoning regulations and sent a letter to the township pointing out some discrepancies in its zoning. She asked if we could be part of a citizen's group to help correct the errors. We never heard back from the township until the evening before the December 13 hearing.

That evening, the supervisor responded with a link to the 2011 zoning amendments, which had not been listed on its website. Due to this oversight we had spent a month preparing for this meeting using outdated information. To make matters worse, the amended ordinances were obviously written to allow gas development everywhere but one little square mile of the township.

At the hearing, Inflection presented its case, which basically came down to this: It's a temporary use; it's not industrial; we're the experts; we're great guys; we'll work with all of you to minimize impacts and concerns. I wasn't convinced.

The residents also presented their case, and those who showed up and stood up for our community heartened me. I would estimate that there were approximately 24 residents who fell within the radius, 9 RDA members, and maybe another dozen or so residents who lived outside of the radius. They voiced many heartfelt, specific and emotional concerns. I believe our township supervisors were truly moved by some of the testimony. However, from a purely legal standpoint, the majority of the citizens could offer little.

Much of this decision will be guided by Pennsylvania, Act 13. Originally the act removed the right of local municipalities to determine locations and conditions of gas drilling activity. However, parts of Act 13 were struck down as a violation of the Pennsylvania constitution, which states: "The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment." The right for municipalities to control where gas drilling is allowed was returned, but after this process I wonder what that means.

Clean Air Council's Map of Shale Gas Infrastructure

The Clean Air Council's new shale gas infrastructure map will make it easy for residents who live near shale gas infrastructure in Pennsylvania to view nearby facilities as well as report pollution problems directly to state and federal environmental agencies. [The map is now available online.](#)

Using the map, members of the public can see compressor stations, dehydration stations, gas processing plants, natural gas liquid pumping stations, power plants, and pipelines in the state. They can also report pollution issues from nearby facilities directly to regulatory agencies - including the DEP and the US Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry - by filling out some basic information about the problem they are experiencing.

[Click here to view the map of natural gas infrastructure in PA or to report any pollution that may have occurred.](#)

Say No to the Atlantic Sunrise Pipeline

The proposed Atlantic Sunrise pipeline would span 178 miles through eight counties in PA. If approved, it would directly impact the lives of thousands of people living in these communities.

According to the Wall Street Journal, 1400 pipeline spills, accidents, and significant incidents including explosions and death, occurred in the US from 2010 to 2013. This amounts to an average of one incident per day. No area with a pipeline is immune to damage. Living in PA, we already know the daily reality of pipeline leaks and explosions from living in the shale gas era. Williams Company would gain economic benefit while residents along the proposed right of way would bear the burdens.

Help protect PA from the

I honestly have little hope we will be successful in stopping local drilling, but Jen and I will continue to fight for our land and community. The determination will be announced on January 5 at the next supervisor's meeting. For now, I have to get back to my life and enjoy what may be my last well-free winter.

[Click here to view the original 12/22/14 Earthjustice blog post.](#)

A Yeagle Road Experience

by Emily Jensen, RDA member, retired college professor

My first experience of seeing a gas well pad occurred at the Yeagle Road site. It was about 10 pm on a particularly dark night, with no stars or moon to light my way as I wound the curves to the top of Yeagle Road.



Suddenly, like a blast out of Hell, appears this sheer, blinding light from the well pad below. I slow but do not stop, as if some unseen danger lurks in this alien spread; certainly I do not open a window. Overwhelmed visually, I can't imagine adding sound and possibly olfactory invasion to my being.

Other analogies enter. The eerie quality suggests a moonscape with the lights of a post-modern, biblical Sodom blazing. Or a contemporary child's erector set gone awry.

I ease on down the road and come upon several homes, placed there, no doubt, for their exquisite views of the hills and plateaus that surround them. Driving now in the light of the hellish well pad, I wonder how these people can sleep. Certainly they have no night.

Presumably they chose this location to build their homes because they preferred the twinkling lights of stars over city lights, and they now must survive somehow with a piercing light that so far outshines city lights it is immeasurable.

And this is only one aspect of the multifaceted sensual invasion. Perhaps one day I'll be able to revisit the site in daylight and open my window a crack to experience the sounds and smells emitted.

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construction of this damaging pipeline. By signing this petition, you are urging the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and PA elected officials to deny the Atlantic Sunrise Pipeline and to instead protect PA homes, farms & natural areas.

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

Fracktracker iPhone App

Fracktracker Alliance recently released a free iPhone app - designed to collect and share experiences related to oil and gas drilling across the United States. The app allows people to submit oil & gas photos or reports. Users can view a map of wells drilled near them as well as user-submitted data.

[Click here for more details.](#)

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, 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 2015, please consider a tax-free contribution to our efforts.

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

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Explorer.....\$20
Woodlander.....\$50
Guardian.....\$100
Naturalist.....\$500
Preservationist.....\$1,000

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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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