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AUG 17 2010

Cooper, Kathy

From: Mary K. Bingler [mkbingler@msn.com]
Sent: Saturday, August 07, 2010 2:19 AM
To: EP, RegComments
Cc: mquinn@pahousegop.com; cmcilhinney@pasen.gov
Subject: Public comment re: Marcellus Shale drilling

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

After all I've learned about drilling for gas in the Marcellus Shale, the likely environmental consequences do not seem to justify the risk. We can't replace our water supply, and enough incidents have been reported to know that we cannot guarantee the safety of our drinking water.

I was moved to write a Letter to the Editor for our local paper several months ago, and am including it here as part of my "public comment".

Please keep the people and the environment safe -- NO FRACING.

Sincerely,
Mary K. Bingler
mkbingler@msn.com
349 Linden Ave.
Doylestown, PA -- in the Delaware River watershed

The Intelligencer, February 4, 2010
Guest Column - Soapbox

To the Editor:

I attended the Marcellus Shale Study sponsored by the League of Women Voters last Wednesday. When the meeting was covered in the Intelligencer the next day, I was incorrectly quoted saying that I thought the companies and landowners involved in this type of natural gas drilling should be taxed heavily to help fund safe drilling operations.

In actuality, I do not believe this new type of drilling can be done safely in every instance and would rather the gas reserves in the Marcellus Shale layer remain untapped until more responsible technology can be developed and more thorough environmental legislation is in place. However, knowing the power of the oil & gas lobby will usually win out over citizen concern and environmental risk, I think it would be only prudent to place a heavy tax on gas companies doing the drilling, as well as the landowners who stand to make hundreds of thousands of dollars in royalty fees, in order to create a fund to handle all the fallout from this new drilling boom.

Because Pennsylvania does not currently impose a tax on gas drilling, a 5% tax is currently proposed to create revenue for the state, ballooning to \$600 million by 2020. Though the Intelligencer article focused on the quantity of water used to drill each well (a million gallons or more per well, a concern in communities like Nockamixon which have serious concerns about insufficient drinking water supplies already), there are a lot more reasons that \$600 million is only a drop in the bucket compared to the actual cost to taxpayers by the time this gas reserve is tapped out.

The process used to extract gas from the Marcellus Shale layer of the earth thousands of feet under the ground is called hydrofracturing, or fracing. Water, sand and a mixture of chemicals and acids (a proprietary mix, contents of which are not required by law to be revealed to the public) is forced into the well to release the gas. The water is then extracted as flowback, though a good portion of the water stays in the ground. This flowback is laden not only with the chemicals originally added by the drilling company, but also with materials that have been undisturbed for eons in the layers of rock thousands of feet underground: minerals, some toxic; salt, creating water higher in salinity than the ocean; and naturally occurring radioactive materials. Water with contaminants like

this can not be safely processed through a regular municipal treatment plant and must be trucked to a handful of wastewater treatment facilities throughout the state.

We already know that this type of drilling can not be done without incident at some point. There are reports of drinking water wells exploding; ponds not freezing over in the winter; massive fish kills; flammable drinking water coming from faucets; creeks running with salt water; drilling water mixed with municipal supplies and dumped into rivers and they've only been drilling in Marcellus Shale since 2004.

We want to think that big industry will be responsible if people or the environment are affected by onsite accidents or mishandling of materials, but experience teaches other lessons (the American people footing the bill for MTBE cleanup being one of the latest). The public will be forced to pay for these gas drilling ventures in so many ways. Areas negatively affected by drilling will likely experience falling property values. Taxes will pay for the wear and tear on roads handling trucks that haul wastewater and equipment, and we will all breathe the increased diesel fumes in the air. Properties in the way of new or widening gas pipelines needed to accommodate increased product can be taken via eminent domain. A currently thriving wildlife and tourism industry that generates billions of dollars for Pennsylvania every year could sustain major damage. And how expensive will it be to test for and remove hazardous fracking materials that seep into the water supply?

Just because we haven't seen any examples of this type of drilling here in Bucks County doesn't mean we won't eventually be affected in some way. Consequences will be felt indirectly, through taxes to pay for damage created by gas drilling, or directly, through the faucets in our homes, as New York State wages the same Marcellus Shale debate and fracking fluids find their way into the headwaters of the Delaware River.

We need to become more energy independent, but not at this high a cost. You will hear a lot about the topic of gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale layer in the months and years to come. I urge you to pay attention and let your elected politicians (local state and federal) know how you feel about your tax dollars being spent to support the gas industry while your drinking water safety is being compromised. Don't let this be another one of those instances where future generations look back and say, What were they thinking!?