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AUG 17 2010

From: DIANE K MCLAUGHLIN [dkk@psu.edu]
Sent: Sunday, August 08, 2010 8:26 PM
To: EP, RegComments
Subject: Comments on Amendment to Oil and Gas Casing and Cementing

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

Environmental Quality Board
Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection P.O. Box 8477 Harrisburg, PA 17105-8477

RE: Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Environmental Quality Board (EQB) proposed amendment to the regulations on Oil and Gas Casing and Cementing, Chapter 78. Dear Members of the Environmental Quality Board:

We agree with the recommendation of the EQB to update the existing requirements regarding the drilling, casing, cementing, testing, monitoring and plugging of oil and gas wells, and the protection of water supplies.

The extraction of natural gas from the Marcellus Shale formation has added new risks to Pennsylvania's natural environment, in particular the water supply. The use of 3 million gallons of water mixed with fracturing chemicals for each well creates potential for contamination during the drilling process, as well as in the handling, storage and treatment and disposal of the waste water from the drilling process. These water and soil contamination issues have the added risk for extensive contamination of water supplies such that human and animal health will be affected. The issue of inadequate well casing, testing and plugging of oil and gas wells creates hazards of the movement of natural gas through the ground with the groundwater, ending up as natural gas in people's wells and homes.

While the regulations focus on protecting people and the water supplies people use, we cannot ignore the potential contamination of water in the springs, creeks, streams and rivers throughout the Marcellus Shale region. This contamination will most likely occur through waste-water high in total dissolved solids and fracturing chemicals being dumped into our waterways. These waters provide the lifeblood of our forests, wildlife, aquatic life and the natural environment that we and many other Pennsylvanians treasure as one of the most valuable resources in the Commonwealth. Thus, regulations need to protect the waterways and land throughout the state from contamination by the wastes and processes of drilling for natural gas in the Marcellus Shale. In addition, the amount of water that is extracted from our creeks, streams and rivers for use in the fracturing process needs to be carefully monitored to ensure that the water quality and levels in these waterways are maintained at levels above those needed to sustain the natural systems depending on those waters.

Marcellus Shale natural gas wells are being drilled close to where we live. Drilling is just beginning in this area, but we are concerned that damage to the natural environment and contamination of the waters of the area will occur. Because it is very difficult to prove that contamination of well-water results from Marcellus Shale drilling, citizens have little recourse once the damage has been done. The natural environment on which we all depend for our water, food and well-being has no recourse and care must be taken that these resources are not damaged for decades to come.

We strongly encourage the Environmental Quality Board to take its job of protecting the environment very seriously, and to not only enact the recommended update to existing requirements on oil and gas well casing and cementing, but to also act to recommend and enact more strict regulations on the extraction, use, treatment and disposal of water used in drilling for oil and gas in the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,
Diane K. McLaughlin
Robert L. McLaughlin
350 Richner Hollow Road
Howard, PA 16841