

3042



Live Well Luzerne, the County's healthy community consortium submits the following comments in support of the proposed amendments to Chapter 78 (relating to Oil and Gas Exploration and Production Activities) for consideration by the Environmental Quality Board. Live Well Luzerne County envisions that wellness will be supported by a safe, healthy environment in our county. Our mission is to empower healthier lives through education, coalition building, advocacy, and research.

Although there are currently no active hydraulically fractured wells in Luzerne County, we still have concerns about the effect of this process on our local air and water quality as well as for our neighboring counties with active sites. How will this process affect the entire state? There are impacts of hydraulic fracturing statewide in the transport of gas and waste materials. We strongly support the new provisions for unconventional gas wells regarding identifying impacts to public resources, standards for freshwater and wastewater impoundments, well site containment systems, wastewater processing and water management plans.

In addition to the proposed amendments to Chapter 78, we also support increased regulation and oversight, a process which would provide better protection of our state resources, and favor those companies which follow best practices in the hydraulic fracturing process. We acknowledge the ability of the industry to develop the oil and gas resources of Pennsylvania and generate profits for the state as well as private enterprise. We believe impact fees linked to ongoing extraction rather than just drilling of new wells may be warranted, especially since there will be on-going industrial impacts. Additionally, we appreciate the Marcellus Legacy Fund dollars generated to date and would like to encourage greater state oversight of these funds to ensure their effective use.

Finally, while these amendments proposed by DEP are a first step toward more responsible development of these resources, as citizens of Pennsylvania and members of Live Well Luzerne, we believe that continued surveillance of the physical environment and population health are important as these natural gas extraction industries develop in the Commonwealth. Additional funds are needed to better research and communicate findings on the impact of this activity in Pennsylvania on human health, as well as the environment and to mitigate potential unexpected events.

In summary, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on this issue. Like any new technology or development, hydraulic fracturing brings both potential for growth and risk. Any extractive industry both improves lives by making mineral resources available for industrial use, but also can have negative impacts on the physical environment and on population health.

It is our belief that the citizens of PA should be better informed and involved so as to make decisions that are in the best public interest with respect to growth of resource utilization. We are hopeful that amendments such as these will be a step in the right direction toward empowering Pennsylvania citizens to lead happier, healthier lives.

Thank you for your time and attention,

Dr. Michele Kowalski-McGraw  
Live Well Luzerne County  
40 West Northampton Street  
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18704  
570-501-6800