

Hoffman, Stephen F.

From: RegComments@pa.gov
Sent: Thursday, May 21, 2015 11:01 AM
To: Environment-Committee@pasenate.com; apankake@pasen.gov; IRRC;
RegComments@pa.gov; eregop@pahousegop.com;
environmentalcommittee@pahouse.net; gvitali@pahouse.net
Cc: ra-epmsdevelopment@pa.gov
Subject: Comment notice for - Advanced Notice of Final Rulemaking - Environmental Protection Performance Standards at Oil and Gas Well Sites (7-484)



Re: Advanced Notice of Final Rulemaking - Environmental Protection Performance Standards at Oil and Gas Well Sites (7-484)

The following comments have been received regarding the above-referenced advanced notice of final rulemaking.

Commentator Information:

Michelle Obid
(Clark.Actual@Outlook.Com)
226 Morning Grove Ln
Valencia, PA 16059 US

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Comments entered:

To Whom It May Concern at the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection regarding revisions to proposed changes to oil and gas regulations (Chapters 78 and 78a):

I am the mother of two small children, ages 9 and 4. My family lives in Adams Township, southern Butler County where unconventional natural gas drilling (UNGD) is encroaching upon our schools and established residential areas. Our local government is reluctant to restrict this heavy industrial activity away from where families live and attend school. Citing fear of being sued by the wealthy, profit-driven oil and gas industry, our township leaders refuse to take a proactive role in protecting the residents' health and safety and instead hide behind the platitude "The DEP will protect us." I think we can agree that the DEP is only as strong as the regulations that are in place to protect Pennsylvania's environment and its citizens.

I am sure that the process of revising regulations is a complex and arduous one. As a mother speaking for her children, I appeal to you to make the most of this opportunity to realize strong, protective and meaningful revisions to the current oil and gas regulations. Please note that UNGD is an industrial practice which has never been proven to be safe around people, let alone children who are a vulnerable part of the population and should be protected accordingly from environmental health and safety risks. In fact, increasing peer reviewed studies show that UNGD does contribute to harmful health effects and increased safety risks in communities where this activity occurs. Oil and gas operators themselves catalogue the inherent risks associated with their operations in their annual reports to shareholders, which include but are not limited to spills, releases, fires, explosions, loss of life and property.

I urge you to implement the following protective measures related to oil and gas operations:

1. Standards for frack pits and impoundment

- Prohibit operators from using any open-air pits and tanks, regardless of size or location, for storage and treatment of regulated wastes. Waste should be stored and treated only in closed, aboveground systems. Waste from UNGD operations is toxic and should be treated as such, not be allowed to lay around in open pits or containers, increasing the likelihood of spills and emissions.

- Require all waste impoundments to be properly closed immediately upon the effective date of the regulations. The three year grace period for industry to come into compliance is excessive and fails to protect human health and safety.

- Require that tanks used for the storage of waste to be completely enclosed. Open storage of waste is not a Best Practice.

2. Definition of public resource

- This is of particular importance to me as there are six unconventional gas wells permitted a half mile from where my children attend school and reside. Peer reviewed studies show that there is a relationship between health and safety risks and proximity to a well pad. Well pad incidents in PA and the tri-state area have resulted in evacuations of up to two miles.

Conservative studies indicate that adverse health effects are observed up to two miles from surface operations. I belong to a community group that has been advocating for a two-mile buffer zone around schools based on the above information. In speaking with legislators and DEP representatives, we understand that setback numbers are arbitrary, a compromise that all involved parties can live with. As a mother, I find this practice to be a totally unacceptable method for creating a regulation that is supposed to protect my children's health and safety. Setbacks can be powerful tools. Please make the most of implementing strong setbacks in these revisions in order to provide meaningful protection to children and other vulnerable members of our population (200 feet and 300 yards are not sufficient). DEP should require at a minimum a one mile setback (again please keep in mind that research indicates two miles is better) of oil and gas wells, waste storage facilities, and any other infrastructure from the property boundary of any school property.

3. Identification of orphaned and abandoned gas and oil wells with onsite inspection before site and well construction and drilling. Plug and seal or otherwise appropriately address abandoned and orphaned wells prior to new well site construction.

4. Separation of unconventional and conventional regulations

- End the use of all open-air production pits for the storage of waste and immediate conversion to closed tanks.

- Develop water management plans that specify the source and volume of the water used in site construction, drilling, hydraulic fracturing, and site restoration. All gas development requires large volumes of water and withdrawals can harm streams, rivers, and aquifers.

- Prohibit the road-spreading of brine. Brine contains chemicals, hydrocarbons, and salts regardless of the type of well it comes from. DEP has not provided scientific evidence that road-spreading is safe for water, vegetation, and wildlife – especially over large areas for prolonged periods of time.

I truly appreciate the time you took to read my comments. As you are revising Chapter 78 and 78a in the Pennsylvania Code, please implement strong, meaningful regulations related to oil and gas development. Strong regulations have a far reaching impact, protecting Pennsylvania children now and for the rest of their lives. Lawmakers and enforcers need to be ever mindful of cumulative impact. They need to remember to look at the long game, which means to focus on the health and safety of our children and residents and not on the next quarter profits to shareholders. As I suspect that Pennsylvanians fully intend to be here when these fossil fuels are depleted, how we fare in the future depends on what protective measures we take now. No price can be put on the good health of my children. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Michelle Obid
226 Morning Grove Ln
Valencia, PA 16059

No attachments were included as part of this comment.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
Patrick McDonnell

Patrick McDonnell
Director, Office of Policy
PA Department of Environmental Protection
Rachel Carson State Office Building
P.O. Box 2063
Harrisburg, PA 17105-2063
Office: 717-783-8727
RegComments@pa.gov