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## Verbal testimony: PA DEP hearing on existing source rule- June 23, 2020

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Thank you for this opportunity to recommend improvements to the final draft of the Reasonably Available Control Technology (RACT) rule for the oil and gas sector.

I address you today as a resident of the heavily-impacted shale gas region of Washington County. I'm also speaking on behalf of the non-profit Earthworks and as a trained, certified optical gas imaging (OGI) thermographer. Earthworks conducts OGI nationwide to document and expose oil and gas air pollution.

During the past two and a half years, Earthworks has made 22 trips to 17 Pennsylvania counties to film oil and gas pollution, covering more than 100 well sites, compressor stations, and processing plants. We documented significant pollution problems at many of them and filed over 40 formal complaints with the DEP.

This rule has been years in the making. We applaud DEP's efforts to date, including the decision to exceed federal standards in some areas, including quarterly leak detection and repair (LDAR) with a strong repair schedule. We also commend the low threshold of 500 parts per million (ppm) for defining a "leak".

However, the rule as currently drafted misses key opportunities to effectively and efficiently cut air pollution. It would leave out tens of thousands of wells and other emissions sources, and therefore not offer the pollution reductions that our climate and health demand. We ask DEP to apply rules equally by removing the low-producer exemption, to standardize the leak detection and repair requirements by removing the step-down provision, and to improve emissions detection, quantification, and reporting requirements. Until this rule is strengthened, it will leave far too many Pennsylvanians exposed to avoidable pollution and our climate in continued peril

### **Apply rules equally by removing low-producer exemptions for LDAR**

The conventional oil and gas industry is a substantial contributor to Pennsylvania's air pollution and climate impact, and should not be exempted from this rulemaking. Yet, the current draft of the rule effectively exempts low producers -- and therefore the vast majority of conventional well sites -- from LDAR requirements.

Studies indicate that *this segment of the industry may emit more than double the methane of the unconventional industry*, along with more ozone-forming, health-harming VOCs. Yet, non-Marcellus Shale operators are not required to report their emissions to DEP, making it virtually impossible to track their pollution. Including them in this rule would strengthen their accountability for the harm they cause.

Earthworks has documented problems at many conventional wells in PA, including frequent leaks at well casings and notable emissions from tank batteries. We have reported this pollution to the DEP via formal complaints; however, during repeat visits to some of these sites we have seen problems that have been left unaddressed for weeks, months, perhaps even longer-- further demonstrating the need for comprehensive regulatory oversight and enforcement.

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**Standardize LDAR requirements by removing the step-down provision**

Allowing operators to skip LDAR will compromise the rule's effectiveness. Leaks can occur at any time, and are more likely to if equipment is not fully inspected and maintained regularly. Earthworks' extensive field experience in Pennsylvania and other oil and gas producing states demonstrates that leaks can recur after an initial fix or can be missed during inspections.

Furthermore, basing the LDAR step-down provision on the *percentage* of leaking components is illogical and problematic. The percentage of components that exhibit leaks is in no way indicative of the *volume* of emissions being released. If leaks are not detected and are allowed to persist for long periods of time, they can have a considerable cumulative impact.

**Add emissions detection, quantification and reporting**

Finally, we request DEP incorporate into the rule the need for emissions detection, quantification, and standardized reporting.

DEP should uniformly require *all* operators to report their annual hydrocarbon emissions. DEP should also conduct field measurement to verify actual emissions and the self-reported estimates submitted by operators. This is essential for verifying that sites are performing within their permitted emissions limits, and for gaining a clearer picture of the *actual* impact of the industry on climate and health.

Thank you again for the opportunity comment. As a leading gas producer, Pennsylvania has a responsibility to rein in the industry's health and climate-harming pollution. I look forward to DEP finalizing an even stronger rule very soon.