

## For Immediate Release

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### **PA DEP Keeps Homeowners in the Dark on Water Testing Policy, Abruptly Cancels Meeting with Environmental Groups**

*PA DEP's failure to explain their water testing policies and use of suite codes continues to leave concerned public demanding answers*

*Harrisburg, PA* – Mystery, questions and concern continue to surround Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's (PADEP) water testing and reporting policies related to suspected impacts from Marcellus Shale natural gas operations. These issues were originally revealed in the Kiskadden vs. PADEP deposition of Taru Upadhyay, technical director of DEP's Bureau of Laboratories—and described widely in subsequent news stories regarding the use of suite codes, which result in only partial test results being sent to homeowners.

"Where gas development goes, problems follow. Yet the DEP seems more interested in protecting its own information than protecting the environment," says Nadia Steinzor, Eastern Program Coordinator, Earthworks' Oil & Gas Accountability Project. "DEP should stop playing hide and seek and start giving the public better water and air tests, complete results, and honest answers."

"We've worked with and supplied clean water to desperate and impacted people begging DEP for more and better information about their water. By not giving these people full information, PA DEP is violating communities' right to know, behaving with shocking arrogance, and endangering public health," said Iris Marie Bloom, Director, Protecting Our Waters.

In November, 25 organizations sent a letter to Governor Tom Corbett and Secretary Michael Krancer criticizing the PA DEP's water testing and notification policies as outdated, lacking transparency, and inadequate to protect residents and drinking water from pollution caused by gas drilling. The groups called for immediate action to be taken to reform PA DEP's procedures and to disclose all data collected through DEP water tests but only partially reported to households where the testing occurred.

Following Secretary Krancer's reply to the letter, a meeting to discuss these issues was scheduled for January 24<sup>th</sup> between representatives of the signatory organizations and the PA DEP's Oil and

Gas Division and Bureau of Laboratories. However, DEP abruptly cancelled the meeting. “Our organizations were optimistic about the opportunity to finally get answers that we and the public are seeking regarding this important public health issue,” said Steve Hvozdoch, Marcellus Shale Policy Associate, Clean Water Action. “We are extremely disappointed with the cancellation, particularly because the meeting was arranged at their suggestion.”

“Residents who are in the dark about their well water quality need answers and as advocates, we are determined to find out what’s really going on. DEP’s offer to meet seemed to represent a willingness to begin to address these issues, now that is called into question,” said Tracy Carluccio, Deputy Director, Delaware Riverkeeper Network.

“It has been two and a half months since we sent our letter to the governor and it appears that we are no closer to getting answers to our questions,” said Karen Feridun, Founder, Berks Gas Truth. “Pennsylvania has over 1,000,000 private water wells, more than any state except Michigan. How long do the millions of Pennsylvanians in the drilling region who rely on those wells have to wait for transparency from Secretary Krancer’s DEP?”

In light of PA DEP’s actions, the signatories scheduled to participate in the meeting sent a letter (see attachment) to Secretary Krancer, expressing dissatisfaction with PA DEP’s decision and outlining a list of pressing questions to which the public needs answers. Some the questions we hoped to have addressed during our meeting with PA DEP include:

- Why are landowners not routinely provided with the quality control/quality assurance measures used by DEP laboratories to process samples and a full report of the raw data and findings from DEP samples?
- When are the various Suite Codes applied (i.e., 942, 944, and 946, as well as any others related to oil and gas development)? Does DEP have an established protocol for which code to apply? How many were there where only partial results were shared with the homeowner?
- What is the DEP protocol for re-sampling and/or using third-party test data (such as gas operator sampling results) in investigations prompted by a request for determination of contamination of a private water supply by oil and gas activities?
- To what degree does DEP use emerging knowledge about contaminants associated with oil and gas operations to determine its testing parameters? For example, DEP’s list of “Chemicals Used in Hydraulic Fracturing Process in Pennsylvania Prepared by the Department of Environmental Protection Bureau of Oil and Gas Management” includes dozens of contaminants.
- What criteria in the test results would lead DEP to determine that water contamination was caused by natural gas drilling? Why would DEP state in letters to homeowners that “The sample results of samples taken by the Department did not show any evidence that your water was affected by oil and gas drilling activities,” even if results indicate elevated levels of such substances such as chloride, barium, strontium, methane, ethane, and propane?

“There is a rig 1000 ft from my house that is readying to drill 4 horizontal wells. I used a TDS meter this morning to get a baseline normal reading because I am anxious about my drinking water,” said

Rebecca Roter, Coordinator, Cross County Citizens Clean Air Coalition. "I ask that Secretary Krancer exercise humanity by providing transparency in water testing protocol and reporting of data in cases of suspected drinking water contamination from shale extraction activities. I ask that he continue dialogue with us in good faith about PA DEP's water testing and reporting procedures for drinking water in PA's gasfields."

"Drinking water to support life is vital, not optional, and the sanctity thereof is being violated liberally," said Julie Ann Edgar, Organizer, Lehigh Valley Gas Truth. "All concerned organizations fully expect to see a significant increase in transparency and responsive cooperation on the part of PA DEP. PA DEP and Secretary Krancer's job includes stewardship of the commons in perpetuity, not "getting gas done" by withholding vital information from the public."

"We believe access to clean drinking water should be a right, not a privilege, and we need answers from the DEP about why their water testing and reporting appears to be missing critical data for homeowners," said Erika Staaf, clean water advocate with PennEnvironment. "We hope the DEP will change its mind meet with our organizations so we can find answers to these important questions for our members and residents across Pennsylvania."

"Our organizations have a long history of interacting with PA DEP and PA DEP Secretaries from both Republican and Democratic administrations and we remain ready to meet immediately on this pressing issue," said Melissa Troutman, Outreach Coordinator, Mountain Watershed Association. DEP representatives originally expressed their intention to the group to reschedule the meeting but after 10 days no new dates have been offered. The representatives of the signatories of the letter are open and eager to meet. The organizations also intend to follow up with members of the General Assembly and the Auditor General who have been investigating the problems with DEP water testing policies.

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