

- Clean Air Council - GASP - PennEnvironment - Delaware Riverkeeper Network -
Moms Clean Air Force - Sierra Club - Marcellus Outreach Butler - Earthworks - Berks
Gas Truth - Center for Coalfield Justice - EDGE - Mars Parent Group - Damascus
Citizens for Sustainability - League of Women Voters - Shale Field Residents -

Thursday, March 26th, 2015

*** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ***

Contacts:

Joseph Otis Minott, Esq., Clean Air Council, 215-567-4004 x116; joe@cleanair.org

Karen Feridun, Berks Gas Truth, 610-678-7726; berksgastruth@gmail.com

Impacted communities and public interest groups slam industry association for saying public should not have a place in PA oil and gas oversight

Residents living in the shale fields and public interest groups are outraged at the latest comments from the Pennsylvania Independent Oil and Gas Association (PIOGA). Last week, Kevin Moody from PIOGA stated at public hearings with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) that public interest considerations “have no place” on oil and gas oversight bodies. In response to PIOGA, residents in the shale fields and public interest groups are renewing their calls for full public participation in the changing oil and gas regulations.

“They finally said it out loud,” said **Joseph Otis Minott, Esq.**, Executive Director of the Clean Air Council. “This confirms that the industry wants to be regulated only by itself. It is beyond time for members of impacted communities and public interest groups to be involved in the oversight bodies for the oil and gas industry. This is a critical moment in Pennsylvania’s environmental and social history, and people who understand the full gravity of the impacts of fracking deserve to be front and center in determining the energy future for the state.”

Moody’s statements last week were in front of the DEP Oil and Gas Technical Advisory Board, where he criticized the Wolf administration for changing the board’s membership to allow for non-technical members to have input. Today, the DEP meetings continue in Harrisburg with the newly-formed Conventional Oil and Gas Advisory Committee. It is clear that PIOGA believes that public participation does not have a place in oversight. Today, members of impacted communities and public interest groups have launched a social media campaign to affirm the right of the public to be fully involved in overseeing the oil and gas industries.

“Suggesting that residents of the Commonwealth should have no oversight of an industry located in our backyards, near our schools and places of employment, one that dumps toxins into our air, water, and soil is backwards,” said **Michael Bagdes-Canning**, resident of Butler County and member of Marcellus Outreach Butler. “Who better to provide oversight than the people who are forced to live with it?”

"The democratic process only works if the people have access to the process and decision making," stated PennEnvironment Executive Director **David Masur**. "That holds true for the issue of fracking, other environmental issues, or any pressing challenge facing society and the nation today. Excluding input from the public is anti-democratic and rarely has fruitful results."

"Communities most impacted by shale gas development deserve to have a meaningful voice in the regulatory process," said **Rachel Filippini**, Executive Director of GASP, the Group Against Smog and Pollution. "Too often those most at risk from environmental hazards are those with the least influence and power."

"How oil and gas development occurs in Pennsylvania is based on the regulations that implement our environmental laws. People who will press for protection of water, air, and a clean environment and technical experts in the environmental sciences, are essential voices on the oil and gas technical advisory committees, which are otherwise stacked by industry special interests. The truth is the opposite from what the industry lobbyists are saying: it's wrong for this committee to be dominated by special interests who are looking to economize and pad their bottom line, directly gaining profits by cutting regulatory corners," said **Tracy Carluccio**, Deputy Director, Delaware Riverkeeper Network.

"While Chapter 78 is a good step in the right direction and shows a positive commitment from the administration to regulate natural gas, Moms are asking for the administration to take up a separate rulemaking to tackle common sense rules to protect our children and the air quality of Pennsylvania; rules that will protect public health while growing Pennsylvania's economy", said **Trisha Sheehan**, Regional Field Manager for Moms Clean Air Force. "Moms have a right to participate in all the decisions that threaten our children's health and welfare. Since the oil and gas industry impacts the health and welfare of children and adults it would be unconscionable for the public interest not to be considered."

"It is ludicrous for drillers to suggest that DEP advisory committees do not have to consider the public interest in their deliberations. When DEP finds harm to our natural resources and the public health and safety, the committees should recommend measures to protect us," said **Thomas Au**, Pennsylvania Sierra Club's oil and gas committee chair.

"If protecting the public interest may 'threaten continued development' of the gas industry, as PIOGA has stated, then it is clear that unconventional gas drilling cannot be safely developed," said **Elizabeth Arnold**, member of EDGE. "That was the conclusion of health and environment experts in NY state, which lead Gov. Cuomo to ban fracking in NY this past December. Governor Wolf should heed the science and follow suit."

"The people who live with oil and gas operations every day know very well that they harm health and the environment," said **Nadia Steinzor**, Eastern Program Coordinator at Earthworks. "Denying the value of public input in a public process reflects the industry's callous attitude toward communities. That's precisely why much stronger regulations and oversight are needed."

"It's no surprise that the oil and gas industry believes there is no place for the public interest in oversight of fracked gas extraction in Pennsylvania. The industry is used to being in control of our political leaders and regulatory agencies. Sadly for them, the public is beginning to awaken to that state of affairs and we want our communities and state back," said **Diane Sipe**, Marcellus Outreach Butler.

"Public participation in the regulatory process is crucial because community members are experts on the areas where they live and can make regulatory agencies aware of sensitive situations that are impossible to know without years of experience living there." says **Veronica Coptis**, Deputy Director with the Center for Coalfield Justice.

"It is imperative that environmental and community groups have a voice on the DEP's Technical Advisory Board. Their motivations are not driven by profit. Mars Parent Group applauds the DEP and Tom Wolf's Administration for adding non voting members whose interests are independent of the oil and gas industry. This move is a step in the right direction for ensuring all Pennsylvania citizens' constitutional rights to a safe and healthy environment are protected," **Shelly Titchen** member of Mars Parent Group.

Maggie Henry is a resident of Lawrence County. Her home is surrounded by shale gas infrastructure in every direction. "They can ruin my organic farming business with the VOC's, BTEX gases, all the carcinogens and endocrine disruptors, destroy the integrity of my basement foundation and crack my dry wall with their frack quakes and I have no say about any of this?" asked Henry in response to PIOGA's comments. "Make it impossible for my children to raise their families on the land we have owned for 100 years and I have no say? Over my dead body!"

B. Arrindell, Director of Damascus Citizens for Sustainability added, "Without the emphasis on care and preventing harm brought by members of the communities where these activities are taking place and experts representing them, there is little incentive to protect precious resources for the present and future generations as is the obligation and mandate of the Department of Environmental Protection. Public involvement is required, not optional."

"Exclusionary statements add fuel to cynicism, distrust and resistance. We must move on to open, transparent and inclusionary views in all industry and agency impacting Pennsylvanian's safety, health and quality of life, and nothing less can be tolerated," said **Susan Carty**, President of the League of Women Voters Pennsylvania.

"PIOGA's astonishing statement reveals to all Pennsylvanians what those in frontline communities already know all too well. The oil & gas industry regards our people, our communities, and our environment as externalities in its business plan. PIOGA's attitude makes the case for the need for public participation and advocacy. The Department of Environmental Protection should rethink who can be voting members on the Technical Advisory Board and the new Conventional Oil and Gas Advisory Committee and who can't," said **Karen Feridun**, Founder of Berks Gas Truth.

###