

Where do I begin?

Thank you so much for the opportunity to share my comments with you.

There is so much to say. Over the years, it feels as though our voices fall on deaf ears. We have been dealing with Marcellus shale issues since the early 2000s when the gas industry came to my Washington County community.

There is a catchphrase by one of the drillers, "Drilling is just the beginning."

We learned this phrase years ago. It was plastered on billboards, newspaper ads and on TV commercials.

Even though drilling was just the beginning of permanent changes to our rural way of life, it all began by misleading the public.

Natural gas company's Landmen began by targeting the agricultural zoned land in our townships. They intended to scoop up large parcels of land to drill for gas. They said that drilling was a type of farming since it was an extraction of the natural resources right under our feet. They promised farmers wealth and prosperity with a lease to drill. They promised that no harm would come from drilling as it only involved water, salts and chemicals like those found under our kitchen sinks. They also claimed their industry was heavily regulated by the state and federal government.

The gas companies promised farmers would make lots of money to fix up barns and silos, and to fix fence posts. They promised money to buy more livestock. They told us that all our neighbors already signed, so we may as well too.

Farmers did not appear to be worried about any risks associated with drilling leases because they believed the DEP had rules in place that would protect them.

We watched our small community go from farming to fracking.

The barns were replaced with compressor stations.

The silos were replaced with condensate tanks.

The fences were replaced with pipelines.

The ponds no longer hold fish but frack water.

And pigs that squeal and snort are no longer real animals but are metal cleaning devices for the pipelines that flare and vent pollution into the air. Our skies glow from industry's flares around us.

Our community is very rural, with narrow country roads that were never made to handle convoys of tractor trailers with heavy loads. The roads are also not wide enough for locals to share with drilling rigs. Bridges have been broken and our school buses have been pushed off roads even after drilling companies promised to stay off them during hours when buses carry children to and from the schools. The gas industry does not care. We are just in their way.

Our school district sits on about 17 acres of rolling green hills and is known for its annual Seniors vs *Teachers Donkey Basketball* game and *Take Your Tractor To School Day*, quaint and much beloved traditions. I clearly remember when a drilling company came to a school board meeting and asked our board to sign a lease for the school's land.

They promised that a drilling lease would bring wealth to the school district.

The company showed a map of the community which had a large area shaded in yellow around the school. The company said that the yellow on the map represented land owners who had signed leases to drill.

When the board left for an executive session, I asked the company to show me the map again. When they did, I asked them why they had misled the Board. The map did not represent those that signed, rather those that the company *hoped* to sway to sign a lease. The company representatives were very smug and admitted to me they misrepresented what was on the map but the damage was already done as they had successfully convinced the Superintendent and business manager to convince the school board to sign a lease.

We later found out that companies hired Army and Marine veterans with combat experience in psychological warfare - or psych ops - to influence communities where drilling was occurring. Industry even had a handbook which instructed landmen on how to spin the truth and mislead the public.

Let me read directly from it.

“Tell the landowner that all their neighbors have signed. Even if the neighbors have not, this often will push an undecided landowner in favor of signing. Remember, the first visit is the most crucial. They will not know if their neighbors have signed... Once they have signed, then you can show those leases to undecided neighbors for added pressure.”

Our school is now surrounded by several well pads housing approximately 40 wells. Our school has a lease and we should be rolling in the dough! Right? WRONG!

I have raised 6 children in this same school district. My youngest will graduate tomorrow. From my experiences, I do not believe our school district is better off because it has a lease. We have not seen the promised financial windfall by signing a lease. My children's education was not improved as a result of the gas leases the District signed!

In fact, over the years my children attend the Fort Cherry schools, our district has cut programs and teachers due to lack of money in the district and a decline in enrollment. From what I've experienced, the promise of prosperity did not materialize for our communities or our schools. Instead, we've been left with worries about the risks posed to our health, our land and our water sources.

Although there have not been any clear links, communities in our region have experienced unexplained small clusters of rare cancers. The cases were featured in a *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* article, the *Human Toll* which also revealed a small cancer cluster of Ewing Sarcoma in a neighboring school district where fracking also surrounds their school. Unfortunately, the state has done little to nothing about this. Parents continue to worry, but sadly health has never seemed to be a priority for the drilling companies or the agencies charged with overseeing their operations.

Full disclosure, some local leaseholders have seen wealth, but interestingly most of the land that has allowed for the buildout of well pads, pigs, compressor stations, pipeline interconnects and processing plants belongs to out of town corporations or LLC's. Some live in other PA towns, some live in New York or Maryland, most live in Texas. Those leaseholders reap the financial benefits while those of us living

locally bear the health risks. **None of those risks were disclosed early in the shale gas buildout. Over time we've learned so much more about the true costs to our health and our environment.**

Based on my experiences, I do not believe industry was not truthful to the residents of Pennsylvania.

- Industry did not tell us that they could be raining benzene and formaldehyde down on us from their pig launcher and receivers.
- Industry did not tell us pollutants like benzene would likely be emitted from the massive and ever expanding compressors stations near us.
- Industry did not tell us that their waste created from drilling and fracking would be radioactive. DEP has known about this for over a decade.
- Industry did not tell us that the wastewater impoundments or frack ponds could contain radium 226 or 228. The state has known about this for over a decade. DEP emails show that in some cases they decided to manage it by "*winging it*".
- Industry did not tell us that this radioactive material would be stored on site for months at a time near our homes and schools. Residents alerted DEP of this with pictures and video evidence.
- Industry did not tell us that the radioactive material would be mixed with other wastes and would be dumped into the Municipal or Residual Waste landfills near us, continuing to expose locals forever. Landfill alarms sounded.
- Industry did not tell us that they would be using *Forever Chemicals* when they fracked in communities like mine that rely on natural groundwater sources for our homes and farms. We worry our drinking water is at risk. And what about the ponds our animals drink from? Those chemicals might find their way into those ponds. Why isn't the DEP regulating this? What could these potential risks of water contamination do to our crops and livestock?
- Many in my community and in our region are farmers. Cattle and crops are in and around these highly industrial activities. Is anyone checking the food we eat for contaminants potential caused by the Marcellus boom?

Oftentimes, during dry or dusty days, industry sprays their access roads from trucks labeled *Brine*. We have since learned that this *Brine* solution contains fracked water which includes dangerous chemicals and is going into our soil which may be carried into our ground and surface water sources. This is yet another concern we have for the safety of our water supplies and our health.

And, most importantly - is anyone checking the cumulative impact to our air or our water due to the Marcellus boom? The PA DEP continues to issue permit after permit - and as far as I can tell, the Department does not consider how many other drilling sites or supporting infrastructure is already in those communities. More and more expansion happens - more and more risks are added and yet no one is examining the overall, cumulative impacts associated with this ever-expanding industrial buildout of well pads and supporting infrastructure.

The natural gas industry swiftly took over our communities. Fracking has divided our townships. Gas companies had a hand in writing local zoning ordinances favoring them and, often, opening up areas for fracking and processing, even in the residential zones. Our quiet little farming towns became riddled with industrial spot zoning.

Companies also wrote bully-style letters to the lease holding residents urging them to pressure the local officials to keep industry happy. Lease holders in communities like mine actually took over local official's seats and pushed pro-drilling agendas in part over fear of losing their royalty checks.

While this was occurring locally, at the state level, documents reveal that industry formed the Marcellus Shale Coalition (MSC) and in 2008 wrote a White Paper. In January 2009 the Coalitions co-chairs Ray Walker and Rich Weber urged the DEP and the governor's office to change its Marcellus Shale Application Addendum making it favorable for industry. As far as I can tell through my experience and research I see no evidence there was ever a discussion about any potential risks or how best to protect public health. To me, it seems it was and continues to be about making it easier for industry to do business in Pennsylvania.

Four major areas of focus for the coalition in the Addendum included:

- Impoundment construction
- Erosion and sedimentation control
- Wastewater disposal
- Water withdrawal

For example, documents reveal the Coalition did not want county conservation districts involved in any part of the erosion and sedimentation control permitting process. They wanted the state's Bureau of Oil and Gas Management to handle these permit reviews and approvals. The changes promoted by industry meant that as part of the shale gas buildout, Conservation Districts could only inspect projects after they were issued by the state even if they disagreed with the state's design or placement. As I understand it, the early oversight, typically under the jurisdiction of the County Conservation Districts, was stripped away and placed, instead, with state authorities. This change took the county conservation teams who know the lands best out of any permitting authority and tied their hands even if problems did occur - as they have in my community.

Did the gas industry know that their activity would create erosion and sedimentation issues in the state? Were they hoping policy changes would not only favor their operations but limit important oversight through Conservation District checks and balances?

Did the gas industry know that their activity would create water impoundment and wastewater disposal issues?

Why was the Marcellus Shale Coalition allowed to negotiate with the DEP and the governor's office certain items in the states permitting process that removed health protections to Pennsylvanians?

And, was the public, and potential County Conservation officials, excluded from those early policy changes? If so, under whose directive and authority?

For nearly two decades Pennsylvania has been enduring the Marcellus shale development.

And still, today no one at the federal, state or local level is looking at the cumulative effect of all the pollutants being released into our air, water and soil in the frack zones of Pennsylvania.

It used to be that one could buy land in PA hoping to farm or be near farms and expect traditional farming to be happening without industrial interference. The traditional rolling green fields and farms have been invaded by well pads, pipelines, pig launchers and receivers, compressor stations, metering stations, pump or substations and possibly injection wells. So, after misleading the public, I guess drilling was just the beginning. The industrial web of the shale gas industry continues to spider in my community and throughout our region. **Will no one hit the pause button and allow the policies - especially those designed to protect public health - catch up with the march of the industrial buildout? I hope this Committee hears our stories and takes an interest in seeking the important changes we need: real change that requires objective evaluations of the cumulative impacts to communities like mine.**

Thank you,

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My sources:

Landman's manual- see attached

<https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/70254/urbina-day-2-in-progress.pdf>

Winging it email- see attached

<https://www.desmogblog.com/gas-fracking-industry-using-military-psychological-warfare-tactics-and-personnel-u-s-communities>