

MARCELLUS MONTHLY

“All the Fracking
News that Fits”

AUGUST 2013

“Gasland, Part 2” Screening – Success!

PITTSBURGH: On the evening of Thursday, June 20, people from all across Pennsylvania and many other states came to Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall in Oakland to view a much-anticipated pre-release screening of Josh Fox’s documentary film “Gasland 2”. Before the film, attendees walked among the tables of sponsoring environmental organizations, perused literature, and talked with each other. By the time musician Mike Stout played his song “Stop the Frack Attack”, the energetic crowd was about 1,700 strong, which is a testament to the public’s desire for real information about the negative effects of toxic fracking on water, air, land, health, and communities.

The film indisputably showed how the fracking industry pollutes both our environment and our democracy, and afterwards, Fox and local activists took questions from the audience. Many thanks to all who volunteered to create possibly the biggest environmental event in local history, including over 40 environ-

mental groups who sponsored the event, the dozens of local activists who volunteered their time and talents, Josh Fox himself, as well as the HBO network, which is showing the movie on cable this month.



Saying “No” to Fracking OUR County Parks

ALLEGHENY COUNTY, PA: In February, Allegheny County Council voted to lease both the Pittsburgh International and Allegheny County Airports to Consol Energy for shale gas fracking. In the months leading up to this vote, County Executive Rich Fitzgerald held closed-doors meetings with industry and pushed the decision through with scant opportunity for public comment. (Although one public hearing was held, it was scheduled only after public outcry, and Council did little to publicize the week-night session.) Most disturbingly, the exact terms of the lease were withheld from the public, and most members of County Council did not understand exactly what they were agreeing to before they voted.

Mr. Fitzgerald has said on several occasions that he wants to “take a look at all County land” for the purposes of Marcellus gas extraction. Now, news reports tell us that he wants to lease the Allegheny County Parks, starting with Deer Lakes Park in the North Hills.

Although Mr. Fitzgerald got his way on fracking the airports, the outcome for County Parks is **not** already decided. The vote to lease the Airports was 9-4, and one of the members who voted in favor has since admitted that he regrets his vote. Only a few votes

would have to change in order to undermine Mr. Fitzgerald’s plans to frack our publicly-owned spaces.

Why would these leases be a problem?

We are told in news articles that the rigs themselves would be located on nearby private land, and that the drilling and fracturing would take place under the parks. However, it is clear to anyone who understands Marcellus gas extraction that noise, smell, and air pollution would affect the county parks themselves, and that we would expose ourselves to water pollution and dangerous pipelines cutting through both public and private land. Ask Washington County residents whether they still enjoy taking their kids to Cross Creek Park, for example. (See “A Range of Resources” on the back of this page for more information.)

We are also told “The drilling will happen anyway. We just don’t want to miss the opportunity to cash in.” However, those who follow this industry know that corporations decide to drill or not based on many factors, and we have no way of knowing how a decision regarding profitability would be affected if a given park were not leased. In any case, the real question is “Do we want our elected officials to **resist** industrial shale gas extraction on our behalf, or do we want them to **invite** it into our communities?”

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‘Marcellus Protest’ is a project of the Thomas Merton Center (Pittsburgh, PA): www.thomasmertoncenter.org

We encourage you to print copies of this newsletter and to distribute it freely. You can download it from our website: www.marcellusprotest.org/news.

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What can we do?

For Allegheny County residents, the first step would be to contact their representatives on County Council to voice their concerns through the [County Council website](#). Readers living elsewhere can help to publicize this issue. This question is far from decided, and we encourage you to check the www.marcellusprotest.org website often, and to stay tuned.



April 2013 – Grassroots groups, including PennEnvironment, Clean Water Action, Mountain Watershed Association, Food and Water Watch, 350.org, and others delivered a petition of over 100,000 signatures calling for a moratorium to PA Governor Tom Corbett.

April 2013 – State Senator Jim Ferlo is offering a bill to place a moratorium on all **new** shale gas extraction.

May 2013 – A poll indicated that 58% of Pennsylvanians want a moratorium on **all** fracking while risks are studied.

June 15, 2013 – The Pennsylvania Democratic Party voted 115-81 to support a moratorium on fracking until “the practice can be done safely” **and** until “full restitution by the natural gas industry for any harm” is made.

It is important to note that the Democratic Party’s resolution does not immediately give us a moratorium, nor does it require elected Democrats to support the idea. A bill would still need to pass the legislature and be signed into law by the governor. However, considering that Democratic politicians in PA have received millions of dollars in campaign contributions from gas corporations over the last decade, this move does demonstrate an increasing awareness that shale gas fracking destroys communities, pollutes air and water, decreases property values, makes people sick, poses dangers to workers and residents harms ecosystems and farming, and financially benefits only a tiny percentage of those involved in the process.

What is needed now? It was the shift in public opinion that made the Democratic Party’s resolution a possibility, so Pennsylvanians must to continue to educate their neighbors about why a stop to fracking is so urgently important, as well as to continue to push politicians of **both** parties to support and actually pass a moratorium bill into law.

A Moratorium on Fracking in PA?

What would a moratorium on fracking mean for Pennsylvanians, and how did it go from a pipe dream to a serious proposal?

A *moratorium* is defined as “a suspension of activity”. It is the people’s way of saying through their government that a certain practice will be stopped until it can be studied and its harms assessed. The common-sense truth behind a moratorium is as follows: “*What’s the rush? The gas isn’t going anywhere.*”

It is important to note that a moratorium is different from a *ban*, which would be a “permanent prohibition of activity,” such as is now the law in the state of Vermont and in a growing list of foreign nations. Marcellus Protest advocates for a ban on shale gas fracking, but a moratorium would be an opportunity to stop the harm and set Pennsylvania on the path to a complete ban.

While Pennsylvania’s politicians have embraced and promoted fracking over the past decade, the state of New York is in its fourth year of a moratorium on fracking while an independent health study is conducted. In PA, the momentum has been building over the past several months. Here’s a brief timeline:

A Range of Resources

Please check out our ‘Resources’ page at www.marcellusprotest.org/resources, and follow us on Facebook ([MarcellusProtest](#)) and Twitter ([@Marcellus_SWPA](#)). Here is a sampling of our recent recommendations:

[Wells drilled in Cross Creek Park in Washington County, PA](#): Activist Bob Donnan writes about the effects of fracking on a publicly-owned county park in southwestern Pennsylvania.

[Sandra Steingraber’s Manifesto: Illinois Fracking Rules a Betrayal of Democracy and Science](#): The biologist, author, poet, and activist offers a concise, reasoned argument against fracking.

[The List of the Harmed](#): The group Pennsylvania Alliance for Clean Water and Air frequently updates this ever-growing list of the individuals and families that have been harmed by fracking (or fracked gas and oil production) in the US.

Upcoming Events:

(Full details, with latest updates, and a more extensive list of events, on-line at www.marcellusprotest.org/event_calendar.)

July 27 (Butler, PA): **Fossil-free Energy Fair (noon–5:00pm)**. Learn more about renewable energy through speakers, vendors, music and entertainment. Details at [Marcellus Outreach Butler](#).

September 25 (Philadelphia, PA): **Shale Gas Outrage (all day)**. The fracking industry is gathering for their annual conference, and Shale Gas Outrage will again bring together thousands of protestors tell them to *Stop Fracking!*

Updated information on these topics (with links to original sources), along with our calendar of upcoming events, and other resources, can be found at www.marcellusprotest.org.