

AUGUST 2015

Drilling Begins at Deer Lakes Park



The ‘Gulick’ well pad, seen from above Deer Lakes Park.

Photo: Sarah Scholl

FRAZER TWP: According to the Pa. Dept of Environmental Protection, Range Resources reported the start of drilling (“spud”) on July 17, at its “Gulick” well site, across Fairfield Road from Deer Lakes Park.

Protect Our Parks (POP), which opposes leasing of Allegheny County Parks, will continue to monitor the work, in view of the county’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” approach toward its contract with Range Resources. [See “What Happened to ‘Wait & See’?” in our [July newsletter](#).]

POP has placed air monitors in locations near the drilling site, and is advising nearby residents on the supposed “protections” which the county claims to have obtained from Range Resources for their benefit. Meanwhile, Range has paid some neighbors \$500 per household in return for a covenant not to bring any “nuisance” claims over its activities.

As seen in the aerial photo, roads and fences are in place, and trucks have begun to arrive, but the drilling rig is not yet on site.

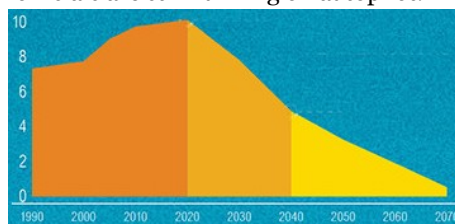
What Planet have You Been Living On?

PITTSBURGH: With the approach of the Paris conference (Nov. 30—Dec. 11), we’re trying to be optimistic about yet one more (“This time we really mean it”) commitment to begin taking action on the climate crisis.

The UN’s Framework Convention on Climate Change, hoping to “streamline” the negotiations, has already drafted a fill-in-the-blanks final [communiqué](#). It’s built like the old “MadLibs” game: all the world leaders have to do is plug in dates here, numbers there, and shake hands for the cameras. But it’s not clear that anyone knows what it will take to implement that plan—or any plan.

The world’s carbon-based economy is like a fully loaded train running at high speed toward a cliff. We’re still debating about how far to the cliff, as if that will tell us precisely when (and how hard) to hit the brakes. The fact is, no one has ever used the brakes before; no one has even located the brake pedal yet. And we certainly have no idea what our stopping distance will be, or whether our “train” can withstand the braking forces without going to pieces. Meanwhile, we’re not even coasting to a lower speed; we’re actually accelerating.

In the U.S., most investors and elected officials are still running on autopilot. If



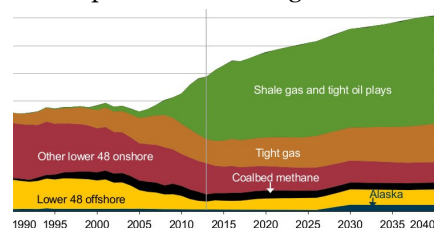
To limit global warming to 2°C, CO₂ emissions must be cut in half by 2040, and virtually eliminated by 2070.

there’s anybody who expects big changes to come out of Paris, they don’t seem to be influencing Washington, or Wall Street or Harrisburg. Climate negotiators and the business community might as well be inhabiting different planets.

- Pennsylvania created a state task force to expedite construction of more than 30,000 miles of new gas pipeline (“and citizen acceptance of it”). Nationally, the gas industry is seeking \$100 billion for investment in pipelines.
- The Carbon Tracker Institute estimates that \$1 trillion is already committed to planned fossil energy projects, all of which would be scrapped if meaningful action were taken on the climate crisis.
- Demonstrators carrying posters of *Laudato Si!* (Pope Francis’s encyclical on the climate) blockaded the entrance to natural gas storage facilities being built under New York’s Finger Lakes.
- Shell Oil is ready to resume drilling in Arctic waters off of Alaska. Shell has spent over \$7 billion so far, trying to bring this untapped oil to market.

These two graphs show the competing world views. In one, some radical (but yet to be defined) climate action begins to show results in less than five years. In the other, business-as-usual delivers unlimited amounts of new fossil fuel.

Which planet are we living on?



Official US economic forecast of domestic natural gas shows extraction continuing to grow through 2040 and beyond.

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

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International visitors want the full story of fracking in Pennsylvania.

WELLSBORO, PA: On July 6, I was honored to have dinner with a delegation from the Netherlands who'd come to see the impact of fracking in Pennsylvania. This was the fourth time within the past nine months that foreign visitors have asked to meet with members of *Marcellus Protest*.

In October, 2014, Members of Parliament from the Netherlands first came to Wellsboro. [See our [November newsletter](#).] The Dutch government was observing a 18-month 'research period,' due to expire in 2015, before any decision on allowing fracking. So, as part of their lobbying efforts, Royal Dutch Shell brought the MPs to Pennsylvania to be impressed with the technology.

But the delegates wanted to hear from local residents, too; so they excused their corporate hosts for one evening and invited *Marcellus Protest* to organize a presentation. We asked Carol French and Carolyn Knapp to tell about life in Bradford County, and gave copies of *Shalefield Stories* for the MPs to take home.

Then, this April, *Marcellus Protest* was approached through our local Sierra Club. A group of municipal officials from Denmark would be visiting Pittsburgh as guests of Total, S.A., an energy multinational based in France. Total has been drilling here in joint ventures with Chesapeake Energy, and has government [permission](#) for 'exploratory' drilling in Denmark.

The Danish visitors were Board members of HMN Naturgas, a municipal-owned gas distribution utility supplying much of Denmark's residential market. Total wanted their support for fracking as a source of cheaper gas. But our impression of the meeting is that the HMN Board was not likely to go along.

(More recently, Denmark called a halt to Total's drilling because unauthorized chemicals had been used on the project. Work

was later reinstated after Total apologized for its "mistake.")

Our third foreign encounter was with an [Australian team](#) who had learned about the fracking ban in the City of Pittsburgh and contacted Doug Shields, who had presided over City Council when our ban was adopted. The group consisted of residents and elected officials from South Australia—one of the nation's six states, and an important agri- and vinticultural area.

Their trip was organized by a local farmer, who feared for his family's livelihood when he heard plans for fracking in the area. So he raised travel monies and induced members of the state parliament, and others, to come with him to Pittsburgh. Doug organized presentations on medical research and legal/ economic impacts of fracking, after which MP Mark Parnell [declared](#), "The lesson is simple Don't do it."

Then, last month, the Dutch Minister of Economic Affairs made his own trip to Wellsboro. Arguably the second-most influential person in the Netherlands' collegial "Council of Ministers," he was due to make his recommendations at the end of the Dutch 'research period.' In Wellsboro, he held a meeting of local (pro-fracking) politicians, a Wolf appointee in Economic Development (also pro-fracking), the head of Penn State's "Marcellus Center for Outreach and Research," the top executive of Shell's gas business in North America — and me.

So we were pleased when, on the day he returned to his office, the Minister [announced](#) that there would be "no shale gas drilling" in the Netherlands, at least for the next five years.

We can't claim that *Marcellus Protest* has swung the decisions: evidence against fracking is there for anyone to see. But, when so many of our own politicians seem to wish we'd disappear, it's worth knowing that, outside of Pennsylvania, other leaders have been seeking us out. (by John Detwiler)

A Range of Resources

Please check out our 'Resources' page at www.marcellusprotest.org/resources, and follow us on Facebook (at [Marcellus Protest](#)) and Twitter ([@Marcellus_SWPA](#)). This month we're featuring "States who've done their homework":

"[Findings Statement](#)" from the State of New York: This is the backup document with "findings of fact" which supports New York's decision to ban fracking. It enumerates adverse impacts on water, ecosystems, air and greenhouse gases, radioactivity and seismicity, noise and light pollution, transportation, community character, etc.

"[Scientific Assessment](#)" from the State of California: The [summary](#) of an exhaustive report which the state of California commissioned, as required by SB4. The report was a collaboration of Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and the California Council on Science and Technology (CCST).

Upcoming Events in August and beyond:

August 8: "Wild & Scenic Film Festival" Ohiopyle, PA, 6:30-10pm. Sponsored by Mountain Watershed Association, featuring live music, craft beers, and films. See our [calendar](#) for details.

September 16-17: "Shale Insight Conf," Philadelphia, PA. A trade conference to promote fracking, sponsored by the gas industry's Marcellus Shale Coalition. Chester ("Chip") Babst, will speak about his law firm's effectiveness in helping frackers to thwart local regulation. Mr. Babst is a major campaign contributor to Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald, who appointed him to the County Health Department's Air Pollution Control Advisory Committee. While Mr. Babst serves as Vice Chair of that committee, he is also lead attorney for the Shenango Coke Works in air pollution enforcement matters involving the Department.

(Updated details and a more extensive list of events at www.marcellusprotest.org/event_calendar.)

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.