

# MARCELLUS MONTHLY

“All the Fracking  
News that Fits”

## FEBRUARY 2015

### “... did inconvenience, annoy, or ... disturb the Inauguration of the Governor....”

HARRISBURG: A “free speech zone” had been established for those claiming their right to dissent. So, anyone who didn’t self-identify as a protestor, and who opted to mingle with other citizens, was expected to be a happy witness to Tom Wolf’s inauguration as Governor.

As it happened, however, cries of “Ban Fracking Now!” came from all directions. The calls from the “free speech zone” could be heard all the way to the podium, where Mr. Wolf paused to invite those “protesters” to help him make fracking “clean, safe and sustainable.”

Eight others, who rose up in relays from the general audience, shouting out over the oath of office, were arrested on summary charges of disorderly conduct. (A typical citation read “*Subject did inconvenience, annoy, or alarm in the manner of yelling, screaming, stamping feet and blowing whistles to disturb the Inauguration of the Governor of PA.*”)

Some 200 people had come to Harrisburg to bring the ban-fracking message, joining in a rally and march to the inauguration site, followed by their shout-out during the ceremony. The [Pennsylvanians Against Fracking](#) coalition, coordinator of the demonstrations, now counts over 50 grassroots and nonprofit organizations, churches and medical professionals among its members.

Other groups, including some “big greens,” chose to stand aloof from the demonstration, having thrown their weight into Mr. Wolf’s election. That decision drew some strong disagreement among their rank-and-file, who were advised that — if they marched—they should leave any “Club” banners and signs at home.

Non-violent direct action didn’t end with the formal ceremony. When Mr. Wolf hosted a post-inauguration party at the official Governor’s Mansion — where he will not actually live — a delegation of “the harmed” arrived, carrying suitcases labeled

“Fracking Refugees,” and ready to set up housekeeping in his place.

Another [piece of theater](#) picked up on Mr. Wolf’s campaign promise that (unlike New York’s Gov. Andrew Cuomo) he’d “have my cake and eat it, too,” preserving the environment while taxing the frackers. Two “Marie Antoinettes” appeared at his party, handing out “cake” to the public, in the form of cupcakes with “Ban Fracking Now” written in their icing.

(with reporting from Michael Bagdes-Canning and Brigit Shields)



Maggie Henry is taken into custody.

Photo: Wendy Lynn Lee

### “Wait and See” Moves to County Council Vote

PITTSBURGH: Allegheny County’s first citizen-sponsored legislation will be on County Council’s agenda for a final vote on Tuesday, February 3, at 5:00pm.

The “Wait and See” [ordinance](#) calls for a “hold” on any activity related to further gas leasing of county parks, until results of drilling at Deer Lakes Park have been evaluated and published. The “hold” applies to any contract solicitation or negotiation for leasing, as well as drilling itself. The ordinance also specifically prohibits the County Executive from undertaking any written or verbal agreements related to fracking additional county parks.



In a historic meeting on January 28, Chairman DeFazio invited delegates from *Protect Our Parks* to participate in the Government Reform Committee’s discussion of the ordinance. This marks the first time that County residents have been recognized by their elected officials as legitimate sponsors of legislation, rather than being relegated to *pro forma* “public comments.”

The ordinance was reported-out of the committee with a rare “neutral” recommendation, thus sparing committee members from taking a public position on the measure. But it is generally expected that the majority leadership on Council will muster enough “No” votes to defeat the initiative.

*Protect Our Parks* is asking Allegheny County residents to attend the February 3 meeting, in the Gold Room of the County Courthouse. See the Marcellus Protest [calendar](#) for directions to the Courthouse and instructions on registering to speak.

Marcellus Protest is a project of the Thomas Merton Center (Pittsburgh, PA): [www.thomasmertoncenter.org](http://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](http://www.marcellusprotest.org/news). Source citations for all articles are available upon request.

## **Things must change, in order that they may stay the same.**

Fish got to swim, and birds got to fly. Stuff rolls down-hill, and money flows toward power. So it should be no surprise that fracking and politics maintain a mutual magnetic attraction.

The day after Tom Wolf replaced Tom Corbett, a new [analysis](#) of campaign finances showed that Mr. Wolf's campaign received at least \$1.5 million from oil-and-gas related donors. The money came from individuals and organizations and from PACs (political action committees) tied to oil and gas businesses.

Mr. Wolf's largest individual sponsors were wealthy investors with oil and gas holdings, while his organizational contributions were dominated by law firms associated with the industry. Among PACs, the largest single donation was collected on behalf of Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald, while other big contributors were the PACs of gas-related law practices.

From another perspective, one commentator [suggested](#) that the drillers' past support for Tom Corbett may have factored into the incumbent's re-election defeat. Mr. Wolf took advantage by fine-tuning his message: a severance tax, to appear "tougher" on the industry than Gov. Corbett, while still posing no real threat to the future of fracking under his administration.

In politics, "What have you done for me lately?" carries less weight than "What can you do for me next?" So when Mr. Wolf began pulling ahead, Mr. Corbett's industry contributions fell from the levels he'd enjoyed in his first campaign, as the frackers revised their ROI calculations.

One Corbett appointee has landed on his feet, though. Patrick Henderson, formerly the Governor's energy advisor, will head up Regulatory Affairs at the industry's Marcellus Shale Coalition. Taxpayers paid Mr. Henderson \$145,000 per year while getting his chops in Harrisburg; now he won't even need to reprogram his speed dialer. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

## **Bad for Communities, Bad for Workers; Now Bad for Investors, Too.**

The sweet promises of fracking are turning sour, even for those who thought they were among the "winners."

### **Layoffs**

- Chevron [announced](#) cuts of 162 jobs (wrapping the news in customary reassurances about long-term commitment, etc.)
- Antero [terminated](#) more than 250 contracted "landmen."
- US Steel, which closed its McKeesport tubular (pipe) plant last summer, [expects](#) to cut another 2000 jobs in its other tubular operation locations.
- "Field service" workers (serving both oil and gas drillers) have been cut at Schlumberger, Baker Hughes and Halliburton.

### **Cutbacks**

- Shell [abandoned](#) plans for a chemical facility in Qatar, like the 'cracker' plant that it has been evaluating in Monaca, PA.
- The American Assoc. of Professional Landmen [canceled](#) its "NAPE East" convention, held here for the past two years.

### **Accidents and Violations**

- Seven railcars overturned near Uniontown PA, spilling silica (frac sand). The railroad announced that it would sweep up the "sand," without acknowledging its hazardous properties.
- A pipeline carrying ethane to Texas from the Marcellus gas fields exploded in Brooke County, WV.
- PennEnvironment released a new report, calling regulatory violations "commonplace" throughout the fracking industry, irrespective of company public claims about "best practices."

## **A Range of Resources**

Please check out our 'Resources' page at [www.marcellusprotest.org/resources](http://www.marcellusprotest.org/resources), and follow us on Facebook (at [Marcellus Protest](#)) and Twitter ([@Marcellus SWPA](#)). Here is a sample of our recent recommendations:

[PA Environmental Digest](#): An on-line collection of news clips, compiled by the Harrisburg lobbying and public relations firm, [Crisci Associates](#). Although intended for pro-business clients, they cover sources from all perspectives.

[Shale gas and EU energy security](#). A report from the European Parliament compares the policies of EU member nations with respect to shale gas and fracking. It concludes that exploitation of shale gas cannot make Europe self-sufficient for gas supplies. The report is interesting, in part, for its arms-length analysis of fracking in the U.S.

## **Upcoming Events in February:**

**February 5, Penn Township (Westmoreland County) public meeting on zoning for oil and gas, (Penn Middle School Auditorium) 6:30pm.** See our calendar item for details and instructions for making public comment.

**February 11, First Unitarian Church (Shadyside, Pittsburgh), 7:00pm: "Clean Air Forum"** Learn more about Pittsburgh's pollution problem from experts—speakers from Carnegie Mellon University and Allegheny General Hospital.

(Updated details and a more extensive list of events at [www.marcellusprotest.org/event\\_calendar](http://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](http://www.marcellusprotest.org).**