

# MARCELLUS MONTHLY

“All the Fracking News that Fits”

## JUNE 2014

### **Range Resources Lease Passes County Council: Protect Our Parks isn't Quitting**

PITTSBURGH: The final vote wasn't a surprise: 9-5-1. Tom Baker (R-District 1) had declared his “Yes” vote before the meeting began; and that could only mean that Ed Kress (R-3) would also be voting in favor. Opponents Barbara Daly Danko (D-11), Heather Heidelbaugh (R-at large), Sue Means (R-5), and William Russell Robinson (D-10) had delivered their verdicts in impassioned language before the vote was called.

Jan Rae (R-District 2) had made her opposition known long before the May 6 meeting, and Amanda Green Hawkins (D-13) was committed to abstention (effectively a “No,” since passage required eight affirmative “Yes” votes).

So the leasing loyalists, having quashed any attempt at “due diligence,” were merely waiting impatiently to cast their votes the County Executive's way: Jim Ellenbogen (D-12), Michael Finnerty (D-4), Nick Futules (D-7), Dr. Chuck Martoni (D-8), Bob Macey (D-9) and President John DeFazio (D-at large) left no daylight at all between their positions and Mr. Fitzgerald's, while John Palmiere (D-6) shadow-boxed publically with his conscience before adding the ninth, superfluous, “Aye”.

### **Climate change: “No”; Fracking: “Yes” ?**

PITTSBURGH: The editorial page of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* stands in the front ranks of our local civic boosters of fracking. Its endorsement of the Deer Lakes Park drilling lease— before the lease document had even been seen—is only one of the most recent examples.

At the same time, the paper's would-be molders of public opinion have called for ‘regulators’ [whoever *they* are] to ‘be vigilant’ about deadly highway frack traffic, and for ‘people’ [whoever *they* are] to ‘muster the political will’ to do something about climate change. [See a related story on p.2]

The folks at “One of America's Great Newspapers” seem to believe that hand-wringing is less offensive to their paying



The front page of the May 7 *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, as it actually appeared.

advertisers than real journalism might be. But we still hope that the *Post-Gazette* may take *some* responsibility for ‘vigilance’ and ‘political will’ upon itself.

Somewhere in the *PG*'s ‘morgue’ of back issues should be old copies of the former *Pgh. Press*, including Walt Kelly's 1970 cartoon where Pogo says “We have met the enemy, and he is us.” It's still true.



*Protect Our Parks* unfurls its petition before the May 6 vote. The petition, containing over 7000 signatures, looped three times around the room.

*Protect Our Parks* had predicted that defeating the lease would take “All the women and African-Americans, and any two white men.” As it turned out, the split was precisely along those lines, with no white men joining with the minority gender and race; so the Executive was able to deliver for his backers in the fracking industry, with one vote to spare.

Leading up to the vote, the comments of Council members included: “Why shouldn't the County make some money? Why do

people oppose it? Why are these people from Squirrel Hill telling me what to do with my property?” (Mr. Kress). “I want to thank *Protect Our Parks*.... Our #1 priority is not to make money. The issue isn't, ‘Do you want to get in on the deal?’ The issue is, “Is it constitutional?” (Ms. Means). “Are we not a democracy? This process has been an exact definition of an undemocratic process.” (Ms. Heidelbaugh). “This is a short-term gain, and to Hell with our grandchildren. What's passing for democracy in Allegheny County would have my father rolling in his grave.” (Ms. Danko). “Where is the plan?” (Mr. Robinson).

As long as the County's eight remaining parks are still unleased, *Protect Our Parks* is staying in business. Options are being explored for potential legal action, and a fund-raising benefit event will be held in Shadyside (Pittsburgh) on June 8. [See our “Upcoming Events,” on page 2.]

**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.**

## Natural Gas and Climate Change

By Bernie Fischlowitz-Roberts

Earlier this year, the world reached 400 parts per million (ppm) of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere. James Hansen, NASA's former chief climate scientist, has said: "if humanity wishes to preserve a planet similar to that on which civilization developed and to which life on Earth is adapted... CO<sub>2</sub> will need to be reduced...to at most 350 ppm."

Many of the world's governments have given lip service to the notion of limiting warming to 2°C.

This would not return atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> to 350 ppm, but it would give humanity a chance of avoiding utter catastrophe. To reach even that goal requires leaving at least 80% of known fossil fuel reserves in the ground, and out of world markets.

In the past few years, natural gas (NG) has been displacing coal for electric power generation in the U.S. Conventional wisdom has argued that this shift in fuels protects the climate, since NG produces less CO<sub>2</sub> emissions than coal, per unit of energy. But

We are the first generation to feel the sting of climate change, and we are the last generation that can do something about it.

Gov. Jay Inslee (D-WA)

now that analysis is more complicated as NG is comes largely from fracking and horizontal drilling. Recent studies show that the climate impact from both shale gas and traditional NG can actually exceed those of oil or coal, primarily due to previously underestimated methane emissions.

These findings imply, first, that the notion of NG as a "bridge fuel" to a low-carbon future is dubious at best. Second, they highlight the economic, as well as ecological impact of investing in NG extraction and usage. NG's insatiable demand for capital hinders job creation by displacing investment away from more labor-intensive, renewable sources of energy.

And, third, since the physics of our climate system respond more quickly to methane and other shorter-lived emissions (such as black carbon) than to CO<sub>2</sub>, our immediate efforts to reduce methane emissions must be as high a priority as longer-range reductions in CO<sub>2</sub>.

[Note: This article is adapted from a more complete treatment, with source notes, available on our [website](#).]

- **What's it worth?** An [analysis](#) of the Deer Lakes Park deal, by *Protect Our Parks*, shows that Allegheny County's [entire](#) royalty revenue, over the life of the lease, would allow a [one-time](#) tax reduction for a typical home-owner of just \$50.

- **News from the EIA:** The *Energy Information Agency* ("official" publisher of US government statistics and forecasts on energy) has a new public spokesman. Per Steve Horn's [DeSmog Blog](#), it's

John Krohn, former mouthpiece of the fracking industry at *Energy in Depth*. (EIA falls under the Secretary of Energy, Dr. Ernest Moriz, who established a top-tier "frackademic" institute at MIT.) The EIA recently recanted a prior estimate on the potential of California's Monterey Shale, which it now admits it had overstated by *twenty-five times*.

- **Can CSSD be sustained?** The new director of the so-called *Center for Sus-*

*tainable Shale Development* admits that CSSD is [no longer funded](#) by the Heinz Foundations. The high-profile launch of CSSD in 2013 led to the resignations of top Foundation staff and a tacit but clear repudiation from the Heinz family.

- **Here it Comes!** The Allegheny County Health Department hosted an [academic program](#) "Preparing for Climate Change," but smothered discussion of any actions against [exacerbating](#) it.

### 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 ([MarcellusProtest](#)) and Twitter ([@Marcellus\\_SWPA](#)). Here is a sampling of our recent recommendations:

[FriendsOfTheHarmed.com](#): Testimonies of individuals and families who have been harmed in the rush to drill for shale oil and gas. (Also available in a hard-copy book, sold as a fund-raiser to directly benefit those in need of help.)

[The Dark Mountain Project](#): Not for the faint-hearted. A network of writers, artists and thinkers who believe that literature and art are failing to respond honestly to the crisis of our times, and who see a crucial role for the arts in coming to terms with a reality of impending collapse. Its founding manifesto is titled "[Uncivilisation](#)."

#### Upcoming Events in June:

**June 8 (Pittsburgh, Shadyside), 5:00-9:00 pm:** [Family-friendly acoustic music and fun](#), benefit for Protect Our Parks at Shadyside Nursery, 510 Maryland Ave., sponsored by "Weather Permitting."

**June 21 (Slippery Rock University, PA), all day:** 2nd annual [Fossil-free Energy Fair](#). Learn more about renewable energy through speakers, vendors, music and entertainment. Admission is free; sponsored by Marcellus Outreach Butler and Slippery Rock University Sustainable Enterprise Accelerator.

(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).**