

MARCELLUS MONTHLY

“All the Fracking
News that Fits”

NOVEMBER 2012



Nov. 3, 2010. Two years ago, Marcellus Protest hits the streets in Pittsburgh's first rally against fracking.

Let's Talk About Money

The Corbett administration, with great fanfare, is distributing \$200 million in 'impact fee' revenue. "It must be good." "It can't be bad." "It's better than nothing." These are some of the comments that I have heard concerning the impact fees.

Let's take a deeper look at this money and what it means for Pennsylvanians.

What is an *impact fee*? As the name implies, it is money shelled out to communities to remediate damages inflicted by gas drilling, and which will continue to be inflicted in the future.

The law requires local governments to spend this money only for certain items: water or sewage projects, training of EMS (to respond to the inevitable new emergencies), low-income housing, social services (counseling, drug and alcohol rehab, and job training), increased judicial workloads. But it can't be used to retire debt or build libraries, nor for demolition of condemned buildings, maintaining structures or improving routine law enforcement (to protect citizens' health, safety and welfare).

Even for those earmarked items, the impact fee will fall far short of covering the damage caused by the fracking industry. Maybe \$200 million sounds like a big number, but compare it to \$2-5 million to rebuild just one mile of two-lane road.

Now add up the costs for bridge and sewer repair, for putting one fireman, police or EMS on the street, for municipal planning, for drug, alcohol and job training. This is the actual bill (which taxpayers will ultimately need to cover) just for drilling's immediate, direct costs. But that's really just a down-payment.

Hasn't Pennsylvania learned anything from its history of long-term legacy costs: acid mine water remediation, unplugged and orphaned wells, asbestos and uranium removal? Will we forget the pollution of our water and air, or ignore the toxic trespass of

volatile organic compounds which have no borders? Or should we minimize the traffic, the noise and the decrease in property values that is imminent?

For comparison, remember the Exxon Valdez: In 2011, every citizen of Alaska received a direct-deposit check of \$1,174 for this one-time impact on their state. On the other hand, if gas 'impact fees' were paid out to individuals, each Pennsylvanian would get all of \$1.70. Still sound like a good deal?

Breaking it down, Bradford County was the biggest impact fee 'winner' (with the most holes punched in their county, and the most damages) at \$21 million, or about \$350 for each county resident. Locally, Washington County (so-called 'Mecca' for the industry) was impacted for \$11 million, or \$56 per person. And Butler County was impacted for \$900 thousand, or \$4.85 per person. As we can see, the ground is not the only thing getting "drilled" in this state!

Our Governor wants us to see this impact money as a windfall for revenue-starved municipalities. But that mindset doesn't build sustainable futures. Once local governments start mainlining this money into their budgets, like that of a heroin addict, it will cause a whole host of new problems. To keep impact money coming, they will have to be advocates for the industry and its profits. Communities will look like pin cushions as the density of wells goes up. Competition for future gas projects will emerge, and a divide-and-conquer strategy will be in full bloom. Just as the addict needs his fix, communities will need their money. The competition will be vicious, communi-

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Frack Forum, Saturday, Nov. 17

Everyone concerned about fracking, new folks and old, will be welcome at our first Marcellus Protest "Frack Forum," Saturday, November 17, from noon to 3:00 pm at the Friends Meeting House in Shadyside. [See our on-line [calendar](#) for directions.]

We're observing the second anniversary of Pittsburgh's trail-blazing ban of fracking, which grew out of our city's mass rally and demonstration, held in the face of a drilling industry trade show on November 3, 2010.

We'll have a potluck meal, meeting and mingling, celebration and strategizing. Come, bring your contribution to our table and to our conversation.

We encourage you to print copies of this newsletter and to distribute it freely. You can download it — and share your comments or suggestions — at www.marcellusprotest.org/news.

Shalefield Justice Action Camp

PITTSBURGH: Join the [Shadbush Environmental Justice Collective](#) for a weekend of trainings and workshops running from Saturday afternoon (Nov. 10) through Monday afternoon (Nov. 12, Veterans Day). Food and housing (and campsite) will be provided. Please [register](#) – and indicate any special needs – to help in planning for food and sleeping space.

Trainings will focus on traditional non-violent direct action tactics; workshops will discuss the impacts of fossil fuel extraction, research and media work, community organizing and movement building.

A big dinner on Sunday afternoon will be followed by inspiring stories, musical entertainment and networking time. [*Updates and details at [Shadbush](#), or at our online [calendar](#).*]

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ties will be destroyed; and, then, one day, the gas rush will be over.

Like the timber, coal and steel industries before it, the gas industry and its money will leave Pennsylvania, and like the addict, the communities will pay the price of their addiction. Look no further than the towns up and down the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio River valleys, whose citizens enjoyed the boom of government-sponsored industry until a finite resource was exhausted or corporate owners chose cheap labor overseas. Then communities were deserted, reeling from the affects and saddled with costs of cleanup.

Our gas boom towns will ultimately struggle with over-stressed social systems, declining property values, underfunded and overtaxed police, fire and EMS departments, poor education systems, a declining population base, high unem-

ployment. Their tax burdens will spiral, as they try to replace what the industry took with it as it walked away. This is what I learn from history. I can hope that I am wrong; but fear that I'm right.

Kenneth Weir

31st Ward, Pittsburgh

Communities United for Rights and Environment

Supreme Court Update

PITTSBURGH: The Pennsylvania Supreme Court heard two hours of oral arguments on Wednesday, October 17; but, as of this writing, has given no indication of when it may rule. The Court is considering an appeal of a July 26 decision by Commonwealth Court which overturned parts of Pennsylvania's "Act 13". [*See our [October](#) newsletter.*]

The October 17 session drew some 200 spectators, who were told to leave their anti-fracking placards outside the courtroom and warned against outbursts of applause and laughter. The original complaint against Act 13 was brought by seven municipalities (plus related individuals), but their side was joined by at least seven separate 'amicus' filings which together represented thirty other municipalities and non-profit groups. In addition, resolutions and letters of support were adopted by some seventy other local governments, in 17 Pennsylvania counties.

An attorney for the municipalities said, "As the Commonwealth Court recognized, the legislature and the Governor completely overreached in enacting Act 13. Act 13 deprives citizens of their democratic right to local government, violates property rights protected by locally enacted zoning ordinances, and jeopardizes public health."

A Range of Resources

Hope and Inspiration - as the darkest days of winter loom, here is a random sampling of hope, to keep us going until spring:

Chefs for Marcellus: <http://chefsformarcellus.org> The online site of a group of chefs, restaurateurs, farmers, brewers, vintners and other food professionals, based in New York City, "... protecting our farms, food and water from fracking."

The Marcellus Shale Documentary Project: A public exhibit at Pittsburgh Filmmakers Galleries, until Jan. 6, more than 50 images telling the stories of Pennsylvanians affected by the Marcellus Shale gas industry (also online at <http://the-msdp.us>).

Nurses Rise: (on [Facebook](#)) "Nurses, as the most trusted of professionals, call on all health care professionals to join us in raising awareness of the clear and present danger to our water, our source of life and health, threatened by fracking."

Upcoming Events in November:

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

November 9 (Pittsburgh): 2012 Health Effects of Shale Gas Extraction Conference. The third annual conference, hosted by the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health. Register at shalegas.pitt.edu.

November 13 (Valencia, Butler County, PA): Impacts of Gas Drilling. Sponsored by **Marcellus Outreach Middlesex**, this is one in a series of community education forums offered by Stephen Cleghorn, PhD, a sociologist and farmer.

November 17 (Pittsburgh): Frack Forum. See story on Page 1. Details on our [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.