



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF PENNSYLVANIA

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The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania  
Public Comment to the  
Citizens Advisory Committee of the Department of Environmental Protection  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania  
September 17, 2013

Good morning. I am Roberta Winters, a member of the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania for whom I am speaking today. We are indeed appreciative of this forum through which the public can have a voice to address the complex issues currently facing the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

The updated website is indeed cause for applause! The links on the home page are invaluable. As one opens the site, there is a front-and-center connection to the public participation policy! The League applauds your efforts to promote the engagement of informed citizens in the decision-making process. This is particularly important in all oil and natural gas operations. As you continue to refine this on-line resource, we would again encourage you to use the mission statement of DEP as it appears on the wall of this room. Many believe that the mission of this agency should not be to *support community renewal and revitalization and promote advanced energy technology* as presently shown on the home page.

On behalf of the League, I would also like to raise some questions about the proposed oil and gas regulations that are currently under public review. These rules are vital to protecting the right of all Pennsylvanians to clean air, pure water, and the preservation of our natural resources for generations yet to come.

- Will the STRONGER guidelines be made public prior to the close of the comment period so that suggestions may be incorporated, as appropriate, in Chapter 78?
- How can the document be more reflective of current best practice? For example, best water management practices appear disregarded due to project economics.<sup>11</sup>
- Will recently-released, peer-reviewed scientific studies be used to alter setbacks and other variables within the proposed regulations?<sup>2</sup> An on-going process should be

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<sup>1</sup>[http://www.rigzone.com/news/oil\\_gas/a/124806/Best Practices for Oil Gas Water Management Still Evolving](http://www.rigzone.com/news/oil_gas/a/124806/Best_Practices_for_Oil_Gas_Water_Management_Still_Evolving)

established for the timely review and updating of regulations based on innovations in technology, evolving best practice, and current findings published in scientific journals.

- What parameters will be altered as a result of emerging impacts of natural disasters from other parts of our country? Photographs of flooded oil and natural gas facilities in Colorado give cause to alter construction standards and prescribed distances from waterways, wetlands, sensitive environments, residences, and institutions<sup>3</sup>
- Has consideration been given to the need for warning systems to alert residents when emergency situations or upset conditions arise? League members in the Dimock area reported that a significant “blow down” occurred without any warning.<sup>4</sup> This created anxiety and served to threaten those in nearby homes, schools and businesses.
- Finally, what can you do to stop the erosion of the needed protection of threatened and endangered species from oil and gas operations? The recently released study by the U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reveals that a fracking fluid spill in Kentucky in 2007 likely caused the widespread death of thousands of several types of fish.<sup>5</sup> Adequate measures must be in place to limit threats created by on-going and unintended consequences of development to species of concern.

In regard to today’s agenda, the League is most interested in hearing from the Environmental Justice Advisory Board. We support the maximum protection of public health and the environment in natural gas operations. In fact, through a Colcom grant, we are sponsoring "Shale and Public Health: A Day of Discovery" at the Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh on Saturday, November 23rd. We hope you will mark your calendars for this free, public, informative event.

The League thanks you for your consideration of our comments

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=groundwater-contamination-may-end-the-gas-fracking-boom>

<sup>3</sup> Go to [http://www.denverpost.com/environment/ci\\_24095949/colorado-flood-evacuations-broken-oil-pipeline-weld-co](http://www.denverpost.com/environment/ci_24095949/colorado-flood-evacuations-broken-oil-pipeline-weld-co). A well underwater can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/EastBoulderCountyUnited> with other information at [http://www.dailycamera.com/news/boulder/ci\\_24102154/boulder-county-activists-concerned-about-flooded-oil-gas](http://www.dailycamera.com/news/boulder/ci_24102154/boulder-county-activists-concerned-about-flooded-oil-gas)

<sup>4</sup> According to the American Gas Association, a blow down is the process of reducing gas pressures by means of releasing such pressures to atmosphere. (See <http://www.aga.org/Kc/glossary/Pages/B.aspx>.) It can occur at a well, a compressor station, or along a pipeline. See <http://independentweekender.com/index.php/2013/09/04/pipeline-maintenance-work-source-of-dimock-noise/> - .UjfCOo4qU21 for the Pennsylvania incident.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/28/fracking-fluid-kentucky-fish\\_n\\_3832139.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/28/fracking-fluid-kentucky-fish_n_3832139.html)

