

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

\* \* \* \* \*

IN RE: 02/03/26 DEP PUBLIC HEARING

\* \* \* \* \*

BEFORE: MEGAN LEHMAN, DEP Regional Communications

HEARING: Tuesday, February 3, 2026

4:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Virtual

WITNESSES: Dan Hagan, Ralph Kisberg, Bruce Buckle,  
Barbara Jarmoska, Cynthia Bower, Beth  
Jones, Mary Ann Stanton, Christine Bear,  
Bridget Irwin, Ryan Bahr, Lauren Bahr,  
Aaron Deffenbaugh, Margaret Cronin,  
Brook Lenker, Gary Metzger, Ruth Steck,  
Aidan Gscheidle, Brian Wagner

Reporter: Corey Riner

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## A P P E A R A N C E S

1  
2  
3 MEGAN LEHMAN

4 PA Department of Environmental Protection

5 Eastern Oil and Gas District Office

6 208 W. Third Street

7 Suite 101

8 Williamsport, PA 17701

9  
10 ALSO PRESENT:

11 Kendra Schiappa, PA General Energy Co.

12 Christopher Yeakel, Aquatic Biologist Supervisor.

13 Erin Chambers, Aquatic Biologist

14 Christopher Mileto, Project Manager

15 Dan Counahan, Director of District Oil and Gas

16 Operations

17 Alexandria Barravecchio, Environmental Program

18 Manager

19 Lisa Meade, External Affairs Manager

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NONE OFFERED

## P R O C E E D I N G S

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MS. LEHMAN: Good evening. My name is Megan Lehman. I'm the Regional Communications Manager for the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's North Central Regional office in Williamsport. And I'll be serving as hearing officer for this evening. Thank you all for joining us.

Our purpose tonight is to hold a formal public hearing for DEP's oil and gas program to hear testimony from the public about the proposed Pennsylvania General Energy or PGE Saluda Access Road and Staging Area project located in Cascade and Gamble townships, Lycoming County.

Please note that our purpose here tonight is to listen to your comments and gather input as part of DEP's review of this permit application. This is a formal regulatory proceeding and as such, DEP staff do not directly answer questions or respond to individual comments here tonight. All comments given tonight or in writing - I'm sorry, someone is unmuted. Chris Mileto, can you please mute yourself. I think we got it. Sorry about that.

1                   So all comments given tonight, here  
2 or in writing by the February 10th deadline will be  
3 addressed by DEP after the close of the public  
4 comment period in what is called a comment and  
5 response document. Information on submitting a  
6 written comment will be provided later in this  
7 hearing and that will be on the slides as well.  
8 It's also in the public notice that many of you may  
9 have seen.

10                   So again, that deadline will be  
11 February 10th and some folks that are speaking  
12 tonight may also choose to submit written comments.  
13 That's fine. The written comments can be of any  
14 length. And of course, we are limited to three  
15 minutes tonight.

16                   So moving on. Excuse me just a  
17 moment. I'm sorry.

18                   ---

19 (WHEREUPON, A BRIEF PAUSE WAS HELD.)

20                   ---

21                   MS. LEHMAN: Sorry about that. We're  
22 still trying to figure out - some people are not  
23 able to view the slides, so. But we do need to - we  
24 do need to move on.

25                   So, Derek, if you could move to the

1 next slide, please.

2 Like I said, we're going to go over  
3 some introductions here. We will have some brief  
4 information provided by the applicants. We'll go  
5 over ground rules for the hearing. Testimony of  
6 three minutes per person and then we'll be  
7 concluding after that.

8 Okay, next slide, please.

9 Okay. So I'd like to introduce the  
10 staff that are here tonight. Obviously you're going  
11 to see these names. You're not seeing faces since  
12 this is a virtual hearing format. But they are all  
13 on the line here to listen today. And these are the  
14 folks who are actually directly involved with the  
15 permitting process for this particular project.

16 First, Dan Harvey is the  
17 Environmental Group Manager for DEP's Eastern Oil  
18 and Gas District. Also with that office is  
19 Christopher Yeakel, the Aquatic Biologist  
20 Supervisor. Erin Chambers, Aquatic Biologist.  
21 Christopher Mileto, Project Manager.

22 Next slide, please.

23 Also from the Bureau of Oil and Gas  
24 and Management, we have Dan Counahan, the Director  
25 of District Oil and Gas Operations. And Alexandria

1 Barravecchio, Environmental Program Manager. I'm  
2 sorry, I'll give a blanket apology. I may have  
3 mispronounced her name and I'm probably sure I'll  
4 mispronounce a few more tonight. Please accept my  
5 apology in advance for that.

6                   Go ahead. Okay, next slide, please.

7  
8                   So from DEP's North Central region  
9 and support staff in. In Harrisburg, we have  
10 myself, obviously, Lisa Meade, she's our External  
11 Affairs Manager. And Derek Jaguella is our - he's  
12 with our digital team and he's helping to support  
13 here tonight.

14                   Next slide.

15                   Okay, so the purpose of tonight's  
16 hearing. This is a formal hearing for the purpose  
17 of accepting oral comments during an ongoing public  
18 comment period. We have about 20 people registered  
19 to testify tonight. Each person is limited to a  
20 maximum of three minutes. Please be aware that we  
21 do have a court reporter present on the line who  
22 will be preparing a transcript for the hearing, and  
23 that transcript will be posted on our website once  
24 it's completed. That usually takes anywhere from  
25 three or four weeks typically.

1                   The deadline to register to speak  
2 tonight has passed. But in addition to this  
3 hearing, as I said, we're accepting written comments  
4 of any length through the close of business on  
5 Tuesday, February 10th. That's one week from today.

6                   DEP gives equal consideration to all  
7 public comments, regardless of whether it's received  
8 verbally tonight or in writing prior to the  
9 deadline. Those who speak tonight, as I said, may  
10 also submit written comments of any length that they  
11 choose. We do ask that you keep all comments,  
12 whether verbal or written, relevant to the proposed  
13 project, the permit application, and DEP's review  
14 process. DEP cannot respond to comments that do not  
15 address the subject matter.

16                   For those who can see on the screen,  
17 I'll read this out as well. There's an email that  
18 you can send your comments to. I'll read that out.  
19 It is a little bit of - a lot of letters here. If  
20 is Ra-ep easternogprg@pa.gov. You can also mail that  
21 to our Williamsport office here in the North Central  
22 region. All right.

23                   Next slide, please.

24                   Okay. So we do have some information  
25 on our regional webpage about this, including the

1 permit materials. There's a lot to look through  
2 there. There's a screen cap on the left side of the  
3 slide that shows what that looks like and a link on  
4 the right. If you want to navigate to it, just go  
5 to the DEP main page and look for the North Central  
6 Region. And then you scroll down, there's a  
7 community information section. And near the bottom  
8 of that there will be a piece for this project that  
9 you can click the little arrow to expand that. And  
10 that's where all of that is housed. And that is  
11 also where the transcript will be posted when it's  
12 completed. Okay.

13 Next page, please.

14 Now I will introduce Kendra Schiappa,  
15 Environmental Manager for the applicant, PGE. She  
16 will provide some brief information about the  
17 proposed project.

18 MS. SCHIAPPA: And good afternoon,  
19 everybody. Like Megan said, my name is Kendra  
20 Schiappa and I'm the Environmental Manager for  
21 Pennsylvania General Energy. I'll just give a brief  
22 overview of PGE's proposed Saluda Access Road and  
23 Staging Area project, which is located in Gamble and  
24 Cascade Township in Lycoming County.

25 If you look at that location map

1 that's up on the screen, it just shows a general  
2 outline of the project area. The existing DCNR road  
3 is shown here in orange while the proposed project  
4 area limits the disturbance is highlighted in red.

5 The proposed access road travels  
6 south off of Wallace Run Road and ends at Dad Dad  
7 Chapman Road. At the point where the road turns  
8 from going south to west is the location of the  
9 proposed staging area where the red outline extends  
10 out to the north. Most of the limits of disturbance  
11 for this project lie within Loyalsock State Forest.

12  
13 The proposed project includes the  
14 construction of a 3.9 mile long access road and  
15 staging area. The proposed road will provide access  
16 to existing well pad and future well pads. The  
17 staging area will be used to store equipment and  
18 materials for the construction of future pipelines  
19 and well pads. The proposed limit of disturbance is  
20 approximately 40 acres.

21 Project activities will include tree  
22 clearing, filling, grading and installation of  
23 erosion and sediment best management practices and  
24 post construction restoration of disturbed areas.  
25 The permanent access road will be gravel except for

1 a half mile section that will be paved.

2 At its nearest proximity, the  
3 proposed project boundary is situated approximately  
4 1,550 feet from Jacoby Falls. A line of sight study  
5 was conducted for this area which concluded that the  
6 project activities will remain obstructed from the  
7 hiking trail by the natural slope of the terrain and  
8 existing tree cover.

9 PGE has worked extensively with the  
10 DCNR, the PA Game Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife  
11 Service and the PA Fish and Boat Commission for this  
12 project. Numerous studies have been completed which  
13 include wetland delineations, botanical survey and  
14 habitat assessments, the phase one archaeological  
15 survey, timber rattlesnake habitat assessment,  
16 denning, habitat presence and absence surveys, and  
17 bat net surveys and habitat assessment studies.

18 PGE's proposed reclamation of three  
19 areas of the existing DCNR access road totaling  
20 almost 4,300 feet. Within these three reclamation  
21 areas, nine culverts which convey streams and one  
22 culvert located in uplands would be removed. The  
23 proposed culvert removal would result in the  
24 restoration of a total of 174 linear feet of stream  
25 channel restored. Road decommissioning would also

1 occur in these areas to reduce sediment delivery,  
2 restore natural hydrology patterns and improve  
3 function of aquatic, riparian and terrestrial  
4 ecosystems. Decommissioning will consist of  
5 loosening the roadbed material, seeding and mulching  
6 to promote vegetation.

7                   An alternative route into the project  
8 area is the use of Butternut Grove Road. The use of  
9 this road is not feasible due to constructability  
10 issues, the inability to obtain easements from  
11 landowners for necessary road improvements and  
12 staging areas, public opposition and public safety  
13 concerns.

14                   The proposed design was selected  
15 because it is agreeable to the affected landowners  
16 and DCNR, fulfills the project purpose and need and  
17 can be constructed in a safe and reliable manner.  
18 Thank you.

19                   MS. LEHMAN: Okay, thank you very  
20 much.

21                   So, moving on to the ground rules for  
22 the hearing today. We'll call orders - or sorry,  
23 we'll call speakers in the order that they signed  
24 up. When it's your turn, we will unmute your line  
25 and then we will mute it when you're completed.

1 When you start to speak, please say and spell your  
2 name, which really helps the stenographer, and then  
3 provide your comments. It is three minutes per  
4 person. We will have a screen timer on screen to  
5 assist, and I will give reminders. If somebody goes  
6 over time, I will, you know, give them a few moments  
7 to finish up their sentence and things like that.  
8 But we do ask everybody to please be respectful of  
9 your time and ours.

10 I shouldn't have to do this, but if I  
11 give you a warning or two and you exceed your time  
12 limit, we do have the option to mute you. And I  
13 will say also that again, I don't expect this to be  
14 an issue, but if anybody is, you know, engaging in,  
15 you know, anything that's abusive, profane, or  
16 things like that, we do have the option to warn and  
17 mute you if necessary.

18 All right, thank you for your  
19 cooperation with these ground rules.

20 If you are attempting to speak and  
21 experience any technical issues, like I said, please  
22 contact Lisa Meade, lmeade@pa.gov or call her at  
23 570-327-3763 and we'll do our best to troubleshoot  
24 that and give you an opportunity to speak.  
25 Sometimes when we have to move people to the end if

1 they have that issue, we'll get you caught up later.  
2 Okay?

3 All right, to the next slide, please.

4 Okay, at this point, Derek is going  
5 to turn it over to me and I'm going to share my  
6 screen so that you can see the timer. And I really  
7 hope everybody has been able to see all of this, but  
8 I apologize if you are not. Sometimes these  
9 technical gremlins really get the best of us.

10 All right, so - all right, the timer  
11 should be up. And the first person who is  
12 registered to speak is Barbara Jarmoska. She will  
13 be followed by Cynthia Bower and Dan Hagan.

14 Barbara, are you able to speak? She  
15 is on and she is unmuted, I believe. Allow mic.  
16 Let's try again. Oh, she is not on there currently.

17 Okay, we're going to move to the  
18 second person, and we will catch up with her when  
19 we're able to get her on here. All right, so the  
20 second registered speaker is Cynthia Bower.

21 Cynthia, are you able to speak?

22 MS. MEADE: She is on by phone.

23 MS. LEHMAN: She's on by phone.

24 MS. MEADE: I believe.

25 MS. LEHMAN: Okay.

1                   We are just looking to get her  
2 unmuted here. I don't see her on there at the  
3 moment. I do see Barb. Let's see if we can get her  
4 unmuted and give Barb Jarmoska an opportunity.

5                   Barb, it looks like you are muted on  
6 your end possibly. She disappeared again. All  
7 right, we're going to go to number three and see if  
8 the third time is the charm here and try to assist  
9 the other folks. So Dan Hagan was the third person  
10 registered to speak.

11                   If you could unmute yourself and see  
12 if you're able to speak, Dan.

13                   MR. HAGAN: All right, how about  
14 this?

15                   MS. LEHMAN: Hey, it is the third  
16 time's the charm. Okay, great.

17                   MR. HAGAN: Third time charm.  
18 Fantastic. And now actually, as soon as you unmuted  
19 me, I'm able to see the screen as well. So just for  
20 anyone else who's speaking, it does pop up.

21                   MS. LEHMAN: Okay, I appreciate that.  
22 It might give a clue into what's going on here.

23                   Okay, Dan, I'm going to ask you to  
24 spell your name and we'll start your timer.

25                   MR. HAGAN: Absolutely. So, Dan, D-

1 A-N, Hagan, H-A-G-A-N, with the Marcellus Shale  
2 Coalition.

3 MS. LEHMAN: Okay. Please go ahead.

4

5 MR. HAGAN: Wonderful.

6 Good evening, everyone. Thank you  
7 for the opportunity to provide comments at today's  
8 virtual hearing. My name is Dan Hagan and I am  
9 representing the Marcellus Shale Coalition, which is  
10 a statewide trade association representing more than  
11 150 energy companies from the upstream, midstream  
12 and downstream sectors. Our members are fully  
13 committed to working with local, county, state and  
14 federal government officials to facilitate the safe  
15 development of Pennsylvania's natural gas resources.

16 On behalf of the MSC, I'm here to  
17 offer our support for the approval of Pennsylvania  
18 General Energy's joint application to construct a  
19 permanent access road and staging area in Gamble and  
20 Cascade Townships in Lycoming County.

21 Natural gas development is a  
22 cornerstone of Pennsylvania economy. With almost \$3  
23 billion in state revenue paid by operators like PGE  
24 through the -, since 2012. Townships and counties  
25 alike are the direct beneficiaries of natural gas

1 development. Lycoming County has seen over \$137  
2 million flow in from the natural gas development.  
3 In 2024 alone, Lycoming County received over \$2.5  
4 million and Gamble and Cascade Townships received  
5 \$155,000 and \$218,000 respectively.

6 Outside of the direct benefits procured  
7 by natural gas development, this industry supports  
8 thousands of families sustaining jobs, many in our  
9 most rural communities.

10 Pennsylvania households using natural  
11 gas have seen statewide annual savings of almost \$9  
12 billion when compared to 2008 crisis.

13 Our operators work diligently to  
14 ensure the safe development of natural gas. You can  
15 see this meticulous work at hand within this 1,260  
16 page application.

17 PGE and their contractors in  
18 consultation with landowners, the Department of  
19 Conservation and Natural Resources, Pennsylvania  
20 Game Commission, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat  
21 Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
22 have conducted numerous studies such as water  
23 delineations, botanical surveys, MIS MET surveys,  
24 habitat assessments, hibernacula surveys, riverine  
25 assessments, among others.

1                   It must also be noted that PGE will  
2 be improving the current state forest road which  
3 includes placing bottomless culverts or culverts six  
4 inches below the stream bed to maintain the natural  
5 stream of gradient where current - crossings exist.

6                   PGE will also be restoring  
7 temporarily impacted wetlands and other natural  
8 areas once construction is completed. This includes  
9 restoration of topography, soil and vegetation.  
10 Specifically formulated seed mixtures will be used  
11 in riparian areas and within wetlands to help  
12 reestablish plant communities.

13                   In closing, this application is an  
14 example of natural gas development and environmental  
15 stewardship coexisted. These two things are not and  
16 do not have to be mutually exclusive. We can safely  
17 develop natural gas in Pennsylvania while protecting  
18 the environment. The opportunities natural gas has  
19 brought working families, communities and the state  
20 cannot be understated. And just looking back at  
21 last week is a great example how important natural  
22 gas is to keeping the lights on.

23                   For all these reasons, we encourage  
24 the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental  
25 protection to approve PGE's joint permit

1 application. Thank you so much.

2 MS. LEHMAN: Thank you.

3 And I apologize. That is a very  
4 aggressive timer that we chose. I did not think it  
5 would be quite that loud.

6 All right. I am going to move on to  
7 the fourth person because I do see that they are on  
8 here. And in the hopes that we can get back to one  
9 and two after that. Ralph Kisberg is the next  
10 person that signed up. And it's really important -  
11 I can unmute you on my end because you also have to  
12 unmute your device. So I'm not sure if that might  
13 be part of the problem we were having with the first  
14 couple folks, but - Ralph, are you able to speak?

15 MR. KISBERG: Got it?

16 MS. LEHMAN: Yep. I think we're  
17 good, Ralph. Okay, excellent.

18 MS. KISBERG: Okay.

19 MS. LEHMAN: So please spell your  
20 name for the stenographer and then we'll start your  
21 three minutes.

22 MR. KISBERG: Sure. R-A-L-P-H,  
23 K-I-S-B-E-R-G. Ralph Kisberg.  
24 Ready to start?

25 MS. LEHMAN: Yeah. Please go ahead.

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MR. KISBERG: Okay. Yes.

The proposed project area contains exceptional value waters, flowing, intermittent and seminal streams, bogs and wetlands. The three bogs are nine to 18 feet from - have a nine to 18 foot buffer. All the bogs are under 450 feet from the buffer. And it is recommended somewhere in the literature a thousand feet of bog.

It is known that under PA DEP Code 25 DEP cannot issue a permit for a project that has a significant adverse impact on a wetland unless the project is necessary to abate a substantial threat to public health or safety. PGE's application does not show the Saluda project is necessary to abate a substantial threat. Public health and safety. Not in this region - fossil gas extraction.

Phrases in PGE's applications such as intends to adhere, intends to follow, to the extent practicable, inadvertent disturbance and 12 separate violations of the Clean Streams Act during the construction of the Shawnee Water Withdrawal highlighted notability of more violations.

We all understand that the need for fuel that allows humanity to survive and get to this

1 point in time where we now have the technology to  
2 move on from there. It is well understood that  
3 successfully overcoming the waste, environmental and  
4 health cost of burning fossil fuels cannot be an  
5 overnight or easily affordable transition. But many  
6 of us understand, most of us, it is something  
7 humanity must do in a timely manner.

8 PGE has a legal right to gas under  
9 track 724 and 725. They probably have the right to  
10 extract it on the surface of its tracks. But -  
11 could possibly cut this project off a mile and three  
12 quarters from the end from the southern terminus?  
13 The reason being you could work on top with flatter  
14 and dryer. Start there. Find a well pad that you  
15 can do with your staging area that needs - you'll  
16 learn more about the area. You'll be able to figure  
17 out how to extract more efficiently.

18 DEP, can you stand up for the future  
19 and take our constitution exceptional value water  
20 seriously on its public land that is a source of  
21 much treasured clean water and serves us and other  
22 species so well. Thank you.

23 MS. LEHMAN: Thank you, Ralph.

24 Just to - so people know where  
25 they're coming in the order here. The next few

1 speakers registered are Bruce Buckle. Hold on just  
2 a second. Let's get you muted. Okay. Bruce Buckle,  
3 Beth Jones and Mary Ann Stanton. Let me see. I  
4 think we'll start with - I don't see Bruce.

5 Are you able to see Bruce, Derek? I  
6 have a hand raised. It's 220. Where did that go?  
7 And then it went down. I do not. Okay. I think I  
8 found him here. Okay.

9 Bruce, are you able to speak? You'll  
10 have to unmute yourself. We do not hear you if  
11 you're speaking.

12 MR. BUCKLE: Megan, can you hear me?

13 MS. LEHMAN: Yes, we can hear you,  
14 Bruce. Thank you.

15 MR. BUCKLE: Okay. All right. Thank  
16 you. I couldn't get into the Microsoft Teams. I  
17 needed a passcode and meeting ID, so. But in any  
18 case, my name's Bruce Buckle. It's B-R-U-C-E,  
19 B-U-C-K-L-E.

20 Thank you for the opportunity to  
21 testify. I'm the president of the Lycoming Audubon  
22 Society and speaking on behalf of our membership of  
23 approximately 350 individuals. Lycoming Audubon  
24 works to conserve and restore ecosystems and we use  
25 our voice to advocate for policies that help birds.

1 State forests are a vital asset that  
2 deserves the highest level of protection.  
3 Fragmentation of forest lands, as well as noise from  
4 construction and drilling threatens birds and other  
5 wildlife and reduces the recreational value of our  
6 state forests. Eastern forest birds are in steep  
7 decline, having lost 27 percent of their population  
8 over the past 50 years. Forest interior birds like  
9 warblers, thrushes, vireos, flycatchers and tanagers  
10 depend upon large contiguous tracts of forest to  
11 maintain healthy populations. Nearly a quarter of  
12 the 90 species of greatest conservation need listed  
13 in Pennsylvania's Wildlife Action Plan are forest  
14 interior birds.

15 The wood thrush is an iconic forest  
16 songbird impacted by projects like this one that  
17 fragment forests. Over the past 50 years, the wood  
18 thrush has lost more than 50 percent of its  
19 population. A - describes the flute like song of  
20 the wood thrush as God's music. And in 1931, a  
21 renowned local educator and naturalist, Charles  
22 Lose, while camping on the Lycoming - on the  
23 Loyalsock Creek, wrote that the song of the wood  
24 thrush feels ancient and solemn, carrying a sense of  
25 permanence, even as the natural world around it

1 shows signs of loss and change. Today, can we still  
2 make that claim of permanence?

3                   In June of 2024, expert birders David  
4 and Bobby Brown walked Dad Dad Chapman Road in the  
5 area of the proposed development. They identified  
6 49 species of birds, including five wood thrush.  
7 They heard or saw ten different species of warblers,  
8 blue headed and red hide vireos. Their ebird list  
9 also included a ruffed grouse, a species in  
10 precipitous decline, and five scarlet tanagers,  
11 another iconic Pennsylvania forest bird impacted by  
12 fragmentation. Let's hope future birders find such  
13 diversity in Penn's woods.

14                   The proposed development in our state  
15 forest is incompatible with a conservation mandate  
16 to protect state forest lands for birds and other  
17 wildlife and represents another step in the wrong  
18 direction for a state that professes to promote its  
19 natural beauty and conservation ethic as reasons to  
20 visit and live in Pennsylvania.

21                   For these reasons, Lycoming Audubon  
22 urges the Department of Environmental protection to  
23 deny PGE's permit application for the access road  
24 and shale gas staging area. Thank you for your  
25 time.

1                   MS. LEHMAN: Thank you, Bruce.

2                   Okay. Okay. We are going to see - I  
3 believe Barb might be available now. Barbara  
4 Jarmoska?

5                   MS. JARMOSKA: Can you hear me?

6                   MS. LEHMAN: We can hear you. I'm so  
7 glad we can hear you. Welcome. Sorry about the  
8 trouble. I know you and Lisa were working very hard  
9 to get you on here.

10                  MS. JARMOSKA: Yes. Yes. Thank you,  
11 Lisa. We ready?

12                  MS. LEHMAN: Yeah. Go ahead.

13                  MS. JARMOSKA: Okay.

14                  My name is Barbara Jarmoska,  
15 B-A-R-B-A-R-A, J-A-R-M-O-S-K-A. I have previously  
16 submitted my written comment by email this morning.

17                  Pennsylvania General Energy has  
18 submitted a 1,268 page application for an  
19 industrialized fossil gas drilling operation in the  
20 Loyalsock State Forest. I have been granted three  
21 minutes to provide oral testimony on this  
22 application. That's about 400 words to let those  
23 present now at this hearing hear what I think of  
24 PGE's approximately 770,000 words. 400 to 770,000.  
25 That ratio is not unlike what many of us feel when

1 reading laws and government agency regulations and  
2 wondering how those charged with protecting the  
3 health and welfare of citizens can ignore the laws  
4 and mission statements and rules prioritizing  
5 corporate strategies over the needs of citizens.

6 PGE's application claims that the  
7 company will minimize degradation while cutting  
8 through core forest to build a 3.9 mile access road  
9 and six well pads, drilling 90 wells, crossing eight  
10 native trout streams and clear cutting a 50 foot  
11 pipeline right of way, a portion of which is just  
12 600 feet from the much loved Jacoby Falls. That  
13 claim of minimal degradation is utterly insane.  
14 It's not possible. Let's be real. The degradation  
15 that would result from the Saluda project approval  
16 would be massive.

17 I've lived a part of each of my 77  
18 years at the foot of Jacoby Mountain. I live there  
19 year round now. I love this mountain. In spring,  
20 Jacoby's mountaintop vernal pools are teeming with  
21 amphibian eggs. In the driest months of a parched  
22 summer, I've watched Gravity Springs adding clear  
23 water to the prolific mountain wetlands of the  
24 forest's unique ecology. I watch in wonder as the  
25 ephemerals come to life each spring. Those almost

1 magical woodland wildflowers that emerge, bloom and  
2 disappear within a brief window of early spring as  
3 they take advantage of sunlight before new leaves  
4 burst into thousand shades of green.

5                   This year, PGE is seeking to bring a  
6 radically different springtime arrival on the  
7 mountain. One where enormous earth moving equipment  
8 will wreak havoc and bring destruction to the  
9 fragile, very wet and altogether unique and precious  
10 ecology of this part of the Loyalsock State Forest.

11                   DEP has three viable legal pathways  
12 by which to deny the Saluda project permit. The  
13 language of the Chapter 105 regulations, the  
14 language of the Pennsylvania Constitution and  
15 settled law by the PA Supreme Court in 2017. I'd  
16 like to share the details of those options with  
17 everyone at this hearing, but my time is up.

18                   MS. LEHMAN: Thank you. Thank you,  
19 Barbara. You literally had five seconds left. You  
20 really timed it out well.

21                   I believe we may be able to bring  
22 Cynthia Bower on now. I'm going to try her. And  
23 then next in order would Beth Jones, Mary Ann  
24 Stanton and Christine Bear. Let me see if I can get  
25 Cynthia unmuted.

1                   Okay, now, just for everyone, when  
2 you are unmuted, when it's your turn to speak, I  
3 will unmute you on my end, but you also have to  
4 unmute on your device and that may appear as an on  
5 screen button on the Teams or whatever device or  
6 interface you're using. So please try to take a  
7 look for that. I think that might have been the  
8 nature of our issues when we first started here.

9                   Okay, Cindy, can you hear us.

10                  MS. BOWER: Hello?

11                  MS. LEHMAN: Hello, we can hear you.

12                  Excellent.

13                  MS. BOWER: Okay, I'm on the phone,  
14 not on my computer.

15                  MS. LEHMAN: Okay, great. Well, we  
16 can hear you. And since you can't see the timer, I  
17 will give you a quick heads up when your time is  
18 starting to close up. Okay.

19                  MS. BOWER: Thank you.

20                  Cynthia Bower, C-Y-N-T-H-I-A,  
21 B-O-W-E-R.

22                  My name is Cynthia Bower. I live at  
23 2753 Sugar Camp Road, Gamble Township, Lycoming  
24 County. Approximately three quarters mile from the  
25 Loyalsock State Forest. Since 1973 I have recreated

1 in the state forest area of the Saluda project. I  
2 consider the land area of Saluda with its core  
3 forest, spectacular waterfall, roadless areas and  
4 exceptional value waters to be a jewel of Lycoming  
5 County. I have guided adults and children on  
6 educational outings to Jacoby Falls and delighted in  
7 their joy as they dashed under the curtain of water  
8 and explored the rock overhang. This was  
9 wilderness, a haven and the nature deprived and  
10 screen addicted culture to which we have become  
11 indifferent.

12 On my 150 acre property I have a non-  
13 service disturbance gas lease. I am not opposed to  
14 infrastructure and activities that are developed in  
15 ways that do not harm the public's natural resources  
16 as guaranteed by Article 1, Section 27 of the State  
17 Constitution, the Environmental Rights Amendment.

18 In reviewing PGE's application, the  
19 ERA, Chapter 93 and 25 Pennsylvania Code Section 105  
20 18A as statutory law under the ERA, DCNR and DEP are  
21 mandated to uphold their trustee duties to conserve  
22 and maintain the public natural resources of our  
23 state land per a 2017 Pennsylvania Supreme Court  
24 opinion. I do not believe Saluda meets these  
25 mandates.

1                   Impacts to the ecology of the core  
2 forest as a whole and the exceptional values of the  
3 natural streams must be studied holistically before  
4 any declaration of potential non degradation.  
5 Optimum siting must be that which is in accord with  
6 the ERA, not TDE.

7                   The degradation that has taken place  
8 due to PGE's gas development on the Allegheny Ridge  
9 to the south and east of Saluda is jaw dropping and  
10 beyond comprehension. I have driven the - road out  
11 this ridge all the way to the pad at the western end  
12 to witness the unconscionable destruction of core  
13 forest and Headwaters land.

14                  The Loyalsock Trail, built and  
15 maintained by volunteers and traveled for years by  
16 me and thousands of others, has been forever  
17 changed. As a public trust beneficiary, I am harmed  
18 and horrified at the blatant desecration of what was  
19 extensive and integral state forest, now no longer  
20 forest, but an industrial fragmented landscape  
21 punctuated by a patchwork of trees. How is PGE  
22 permitted to destroy the natural forest values to  
23 which I am entitled to enjoy? On the Allegheny  
24 Ridge and in other state forests, DCNR and DEP have  
25 failed to protect my rights and those of all

1 beneficiaries under the ERA.

2                   The concerns outlined above are  
3 brought to center stage on the Allegheny Ridge.  
4 This travesty must not happen with Saluda. Enough  
5 is enough and even already too much. Saluda as  
6 proposed must be denied. It remains to be seen  
7 whether our constitutionally bound Commonwealth  
8 trustee of the will, strength of mind and courage to  
9 do so. Thank you.

10                   MS. LEHMAN: Thank you, Cynthia.

11                   So next up is Beth Jones. And I can  
12 unmute you, Beth, and you will have to unmute  
13 yourself as well.

14                   MS. JONES: Okay, I'm here.

15                   MS. LEHMAN: We can hear you.

16                   MS. JONES: Can you hear me?

17                   MS. LEHMAN: Yep.

18                   MS. JONES: Okay.

19                   Beth Jones, B-E-T-H, J-O-N-E-S. I  
20 run a nonprofit in this area called Deep Green  
21 Journey and as such conduct forest therapy and  
22 backpack trips throughout the Loyalsock State  
23 Forest. The region in question this evening,  
24 including the streams around Jacoby Falls, is a  
25 region that is - has some of the most pristine

1 beauty in the Loyalsock State Forest. It includes -  
2 Apollo, which is this beautiful valley of waterfalls  
3 and rock formations down a narrow canyon into the  
4 Loyalsock Valley that I understand would be closed  
5 off as we understand that that Dad Dad Chapman Road  
6 will be restricted.

7 I know that money is a big factor in  
8 gas development and I ask the DEP to also consider  
9 the money loss as we destroy acres of one of PA's  
10 best and most lucrative resources, the outdoor  
11 industry. It brings in \$19 million each year to our  
12 state. People come to attend Deep Green Journey  
13 events from outside of our state as well. Maryland,  
14 Ohio, Delaware, even as far as South Carolina and  
15 Texas. And they don't just spend money for the  
16 event, their just trips also include local economy,  
17 hotel, gas, restaurants.

18 Hunters, fishermen, hikers,  
19 backpackers, mountain bikers, birders, all will be  
20 impacted by this decision to bring destruction on  
21 this well-known and often visited beautiful section  
22 of the Loyalsock State Forest.

23 Outdoor recreation, as I said, brings  
24 in \$19 billion just last year alone, or two percent  
25 of the GDP of our state. Fracking only 1.3 percent.

1 And yet we want to give away our most precious  
2 resource.

3 I can understand why there's public  
4 opposition and rejection by private landowners to  
5 this road. This is on top of the habitat  
6 destruction to the forest. I have witnessed the  
7 clear cutting of access road across the valley near  
8 the Bryan Hay Trail and the Allegheny Front, as was  
9 just mentioned, where the Loyalsock Trail crosses  
10 numerous times. It has turned what was a beautiful  
11 section of that forest and of the Loyalsock Trail  
12 into a wasteland of ruts and stumps, unrooted trees  
13 and mud.

14 It's not just the streams on this  
15 road that will - that this road will cross that are  
16 rated exceptional value, but the vernal pools  
17 located towards the top of the mountain as well as  
18 every wrinkle of these mountains and valleys that  
19 house a unique habitat for all sorts of organisms,  
20 both seen and unseen. And while there is a promise  
21 of restoration, there is no bringing back those  
22 habitats that have existed and flourished for  
23 decades. By cutting a large swath across this  
24 forest, you're destroying a cycle that continues on  
25 and on.

1                   What's not seen is the disruption of  
2 feeding and greeting for countless creatures. And  
3 while we admire the resiliency of nature, for how  
4 long will we continue to destroy pieces of habitat  
5 in the name of profit? Thank you.

6                   MS. LEHMAN: Thank you very much,  
7 Beth.

8                   Next up we have Mary Ann Stanton,  
9 followed by Christine Bear and Bridget Irwin. Let's  
10 find Mary Ann here.

11                   Okay, Mary Ann, you will need to  
12 unmute yourself. Can you hear us?

13                   MS. STANTON: Okay, can you hear me?

14                   MS. LEHMAN: We can.

15                   MS. STANTON: Great. Thank you so  
16 much.

17                   My name is Mary Ann Stanton, M-A-R-Y,  
18 capital A-N-N, Stanton, S-T-A-N-T-O-N.

19                   I live in Union County, Pennsylvania,  
20 so I'm no longer a resident of Lycoming County. But  
21 I grew up in the farmhouse across the field from the  
22 trail that leads to Jacoby Falls. I waited for the  
23 school bus at the end of our driveway between those  
24 two pillars that also serve as gravestones for  
25 Surrey horses that were raised there once upon a

1 time.

2                   Admittedly, my residence on the farm  
3 wasn't recent, but the many wonderful adventures  
4 we've had as a family and with friends often  
5 centered on that trail and at those falls. And  
6 those are deeply embedded in my memories and are  
7 more than likely a huge part of why I'm such an avid  
8 hiker and forest enthusiast as an adult.

9                   We walked that trail as a family,  
10 with friends, with our girl and boy scout troops. I  
11 even had a birthday hike for what I think was my  
12 12th birthday, where a group of 15 or so girls hiked  
13 with my dad, God bless him, to the falls and camped  
14 there overnight. My friend Maria actually fell and  
15 broke her arm, making an even more memorable  
16 birthday more so. We had to bring her out on my  
17 horse, meeting the ambulance at my driveway as we  
18 exited the trail.

19                   The valley that our house sat in  
20 remains beautiful and undeveloped to this day. Fish  
21 are still beautiful - are still bountiful in Wallis  
22 Run and the other streams and creeks that lead into  
23 or out of the area. Deer and wild turkeys still  
24 gather by the tens and twenties on the front yard  
25 and across the road and in the fields.

1                   Industrial development, building an  
2 access road and paths would irrevocably and  
3 seriously damage that. Not to mention the  
4 destruction it would cause the series of streams  
5 that crisscross the trails into the falls.

6                   For the ten years my family lived on  
7 that property, I rode my horse all over the 742  
8 acres that were part of that parcel and wandered in  
9 and out of state forest and game land at will. My  
10 mother ran along the trails, making her daily run  
11 more interesting than running up and down the road.  
12 We coexisted with hunters. My brother was an avid  
13 hunter, wearing glaze orange when we walked during  
14 the hunting season. Even my horse had an orange  
15 blanket. And an annual rattlesnake rodeo was held  
16 on our property for years, much to my horror. There  
17 are natural - they are multiple snake habitats on  
18 the space slated for development. We had special  
19 sneakers we wore when hiking that trail so much - as  
20 much because my mother grew tired of scolding us for  
21 muddy and wet shoes, as for the practicality of all.

22                   This peace that you feel on that  
23 trail, especially as the falls verge on spiritual,  
24 the endless habitat for so much wildlife. Yes, even  
25 the snakes is so fully developed from the decades,

1 no, centuries of uninterrupted peace and tranquility  
2 that any interruption, especially one this dramatic  
3 and irreversible, would change the character of the  
4 area forever.

5 I've seen firsthand the devastation  
6 that natural gas drilling can do to an area both in  
7 their active and dormant states. We all know that  
8 the drilling itself is only part of the story. The  
9 access roads, the water retention facilities, the  
10 increased traffic to and from sites, not to mention  
11 the drilling pads themselves, are - to all that the  
12 area represents. Thank you so much for this  
13 opportunity to speak.

14 MS. LEHMAN: Thank you, Mary.

15 Next we have Christine Bear, followed  
16 by Bridget Irwin and Ryan Bahr.

17 Christine, I am unmuting you and you  
18 will have to unmute yourself. You're good, okay.

19 MS. BEAR: Can you hear me? Okay,  
20 great.

21 Hi, my name is Christine Bear,  
22 C-H-R-I-S-T-I-N-E, B-E-A-R.

23 So I would like to also say thank you  
24 for this opportunity to speak. I would like to  
25 share that I am a very fortunate person because I

1 live approximately four miles from Jacoby Falls. It  
2 is a place that I have frequented many times with my  
3 husband and my boys. And like the person just  
4 mentioned earlier, we - that's just our go to in the  
5 summertime and even in the wintertime. We hike  
6 those falls a lot. I've always been grateful to  
7 have that beautiful hiking trail and area so close  
8 to my home.

9 I am an avid hiker and a person who  
10 enjoys being out in nature. So to not advocate to  
11 keep that area and especially Jacoby Waterfalls in  
12 the pristine condition that it is right now would  
13 not be the right thing for me.

14 So I'm asking under the DEP Chapter  
15 105 regulations, this project, the Saluda project,  
16 must not be permitted. The risk that this project  
17 poses to the value of the water in the falls.  
18 Thinking about the children and the hikers who enjoy  
19 the water in the summertime. The native trout that  
20 I know live there and - all year long. They thrive  
21 on a healthy ecosystem. And all of the other forms  
22 of life that enjoy the water is too great of a risk.

23 The exceptional value - people have  
24 talked about this. The exceptional value water  
25 source for the falls is threatened under this

1 project. And the natural beauty of the waterfall  
2 and the exceptional value of water source must be  
3 protected. And especially the native trout that  
4 live there.

5                   The Jacoby Falls area is beautiful  
6 and breathtaking. And it is our duty to preserve  
7 the water source at Jacoby Falls. Nobody is going  
8 to make more land as we all know. And with that  
9 being said, it is our responsibility to take care of  
10 the land that we are provided with before it is  
11 destroyed.

12                   I volunteer to speak today not  
13 because I'm a public speaker, but because I really  
14 truly believe that it's very important to protect  
15 Jacoby Falls, it's exceptional value water source  
16 that is there. And like others have mentioned,  
17 there is no restoring that area to what it was  
18 before. The damage that will be done will be  
19 irreversible. And it's our responsibility to  
20 protect it.

21                   So I'm asking you to deny PGE's  
22 access to and the Saluda project. And I also wanted  
23 to say, if I have time, thank you for all the other  
24 people that are speaking on behalf of Jacoby Falls  
25 to protect that precious land. Thank you.

1                   MS. LEHMAN: Thank you, Christine.

2                   MS. BEAR: You're welcome.

3                   MS. LEHMAN: I'm just muting you and  
4 - all right.

5                   The next registered speaker is  
6 Bridget Irwin. I see she is on the line. So I'm  
7 enabling you, Bridget. You'll un mute from your end  
8 and then you can start speaking.

9                   MS. IRWIN: So I think the only thing  
10 I really have to say is that I've lived walking  
11 distance from Jacoby Falls and it was such a  
12 beautiful area that really just needs to be  
13 preserved. And it's kind of a unique perspective  
14 that I bring because I used to be married to the oil  
15 field until I realized that the things that they're  
16 using are proprietary. And they would let my  
17 husband die before telling me how to help him. So  
18 if they're willing to let a human die, what does  
19 that mean that they're going to do to protect our  
20 land? So with that, I think I yield the rest of my  
21 time to the next speaker.

22                   MS. LEHMAN: Thank you, Bridget.

23                   Okay, the next speaker is Ryan Bahr  
24 followed by Lauren Bahr and Mia Schuler.

25                   Brian? There you are. Okay, Brian,

1 you are unmuted.

2 MR. BAHR: Can you hear me?

3 MS. LEHMAN: Yep, we can hear you.

4 MR. BAHR: All right.

5 Good afternoon. I'd like to start  
6 off by saying thank you to DEP for setting up this  
7 hearing for the community to voice their concerns on  
8 this project. Sometime in my youth, PGE started  
9 their expansion of gas pads on the Allegheny Ridge,  
10 and my experiences in the state forest started to  
11 change. The night skyline on the ridge, which used  
12 to be speckled with stars, is now shrouded by lights  
13 from a series of gas well pads cut into the  
14 mountain. Once remote trails now intersect with  
15 pipelines and gas roads. I've seen firsthand the  
16 impacts of this expansion on fracking of both the  
17 wildlife of the forest and its recreation  
18 experience. And I feel it's time to stand up for  
19 the state forest that has given me so much.

20 The stream in Jacoby Hollow is  
21 classified by PA Fish and Boat as a natural  
22 reproduction trout stream. The road grade PGE plans  
23 to put into the existing Dad Dad Chapman Road will  
24 come within 200 feet of the head waters of this  
25 stream and continue just several hundred yards away,

1 uphill of the stream.

2                   The first three quarters of a mile of  
3 this gas road in the state forest will be built  
4 directly on top of an unnamed tributary to Wallis  
5 Run. On the other side of the mountain is a stream  
6 called Bar Bottom which is classified by PA Fish and  
7 Boat as a Class A brook trout stream. Pennsylvania  
8 State Fish. The construction of a four mile road so  
9 close to or directly on top of these streams with 20  
10 permanent stream crossings and eight permanent  
11 wetland crossings will dramatically alter this  
12 watershed.

13                   Trout are fragile fish. They need  
14 clean water, cold water and the appropriate gravel  
15 in the stream bed to spawn. This road will cause  
16 excess runoff and sediment to enter the stream which  
17 will damage trout spawning beds and decrease water  
18 quality.

19                   The fracking process from the  
20 resulting well pads can contaminate the groundwater  
21 and surface water which feeds surrounding streams,  
22 causing an even larger impact to our watershed and  
23 our drinking water.

24                   And this water for fracking has to  
25 come from somewhere. An additional six well pads on

1 the state forest will require millions of gallons  
2 for each well pad to complete their fracturing  
3 process. This water will be pulled from the  
4 Loyalsock Creek which is used by many in the  
5 community for fishing, boating and other recreation.  
6 How will this affect the creek in times of drought  
7 and extreme heat?

8 I'd like to conclude my comment with  
9 this. If you issue the Chapter 105 permit to PGE,  
10 you are continuing the narrative for the misuse of  
11 our state forest. Your role in our government is to  
12 protect the environment. We want clean water. We  
13 want healthy streams. And we want to be able to  
14 take our future generations to catch brook trout in  
15 our state forests.

16 How many other wild places in our  
17 forest will be lost in the future from this greed  
18 for energy development? Changes like this are not  
19 easily undone. You have a decision to make. Are  
20 you going to protect our state forest, watershed and  
21 drinking water? Will you allow the continued  
22 fragmentation of our forest and contamination of our  
23 streams so PGE can make a profit? Thank you.

24 MS. LEHMAN: Thank you, Brian.

25 And just a reminder, when you start

1 to speak, if you could please take a moment to say  
2 and spell your name again just for the court  
3 reporter to make it easier for them.

4 Anna's muted and we're going to  
5 Lauren Bahr. All right, Lauren, you are unmuted on  
6 our end.

7 MS. BAHR: All right. Can you hear  
8 me?

9 MS. LEHMAN: Yes, we can. Thank you.

10 MS. BAHR: All right, thanks.

11 My name is Lauren Bahr, L-A-U-R-E-N,  
12 B-A-H-R. Okay.

13 Hi. My name is Laura Bahr. I was  
14 born and raised in Lycoming County. I grew up ten  
15 minutes from access to the Loyalsock Trail system  
16 and I spent a lot of time running around on state  
17 forest land. I'm 27, so growing up in this region  
18 when I did, I saw firsthand the impact of the  
19 natural gas industry on these ecosystems as the  
20 industry exploded and brought light and noise  
21 pollution, increased emissions from fleets of heavy  
22 machinery and roads that scarred and fractured  
23 important habitats. I have watched and grieved as  
24 beloved trails are gouged, forests are cleared and  
25 the installation of well pads brings chaos to what

1 had always been a calm refuge for me and many  
2 others. As both an avid outdoors person and a  
3 scientist, I care deeply about ensuring the  
4 accessibility and health of our forests for  
5 generations to come.

6           Drilling for natural gas is not an  
7 innocent or clean way of producing energy. A  
8 publication from researchers at Washington State  
9 University reports that flaring, the burning off of  
10 natural gas byproducts during extraction, is linked  
11 to increases in respiratory health related hospital  
12 visits in local communities downwind of these wells,  
13 a direct impact on human health. This is not  
14 something that has only been observed west of us.  
15 Multiple studies of Pennsylvania have found  
16 significant associations between fracking and severe  
17 asthma, increases in lymphoma cases near active gas  
18 pads and poor birth outcomes.

19           Additionally, there's the  
20 environmental impact associated with this project.  
21 A four mile permanent access road with multiple  
22 permanent stream and wetland crosses is by  
23 definition going to fracture habitats. A huge  
24 amount of waste is generated during the process of  
25 fracking. And even if this waste does not flow

1 directly into our waterways, which we cannot ensure,  
2 it is taken to landfills where runoff, which can  
3 contain heavy metals and radioactive materials,  
4 makes its way into local waterways. Researchers in  
5 Western PA have recently found elevated levels of  
6 radium in freshwater mussels that live downstream of  
7 gas wastewater discharge points.

8 I am devastated to think of further  
9 destruction of the state forest that we are so lucky  
10 to recreate in, in the name of profit. I cannot  
11 quantify the good these forests have done for me and  
12 so many others. They are quite literally a  
13 priceless resource.

14 I believe that if we claim to love  
15 the woods, the environment and the region we call  
16 home, it is our responsibility to protect the health  
17 of all beings in and around this land. For this  
18 reason, I strongly oppose the approval of this  
19 project. Thank you so much for your time and for  
20 organizing this hearing.

21 MS. LEHMAN: Thank you very much.

22 The next speaker is Mia Schuler,  
23 followed by Aaron Deffenbaugh and Andrea Homit. I  
24 am not sure if Mia is on the line. I was kind of  
25 having trouble reaching her the last few days, so.

1 I think there's a hand raise option if Mia's here.  
2 If you - I don't see you on the list, and I don't  
3 have a phone number for you. Okay, I'm going to  
4 assume she's not and then move on to Aaron  
5 Deffenbaugh as our next speaker.

6 MR. DEFFENBAUGH: Hello, can you hear  
7 me?

8 MS. LEHMAN: We can hear you. Thank  
9 you.

10 MR. DEFFENBAUGH: Amazing.

11 MS. LEHMAN: Go ahead.

12 MR. DEFFENBAUGH: My name is Aaron  
13 Deffenbaugh, A-A-R-O-N, D-E-F-F-E-N-B-A-U-G-H. Long  
14 last name there for you.

15 To get started, I am a Lycoming  
16 College student. I'm not originally from this area.  
17 I'm actually from southwestern Pennsylvania, from  
18 the Johnstown area. The Johnstown area is very  
19 industrialized. It's one of the original areas that  
20 started the steel industry. And that area just got  
21 basically demolished by the industry of that time.  
22 And I am really scared to see that kind of  
23 demolition happen in this area here.

24 One of the reasons I chose Lycoming  
25 College was because of the forests that the Lycoming

1 County has. Back home, we - I have to go very far  
2 to get away from this industrialization of energy  
3 and of the steel industry. And the Lycoming College  
4 and the Williamsport area and the Loyalsock area  
5 really lets you get free of that really easily with  
6 the vast trails and infrastructure that we have here  
7 for the wilderness exploration.

8 I'm also a film major here at  
9 Lycoming College, and last year, I believe three or  
10 four of the senior films were filmed in the state  
11 forests, and especially a few at the Jacoby Fall  
12 Trails. It's a really beautiful area, and it was  
13 very impactful for myself and I know my fellow  
14 students that we are able to go to this beautiful  
15 secluded area that doesn't have too many industrial  
16 parts to it, really close to a town like  
17 Williamsport.

18 We also, here in Pennsylvania, we  
19 have no national parks in our state. That means  
20 that the state forests are so much more important  
21 and we have to protect them so much more because  
22 there is no big federal government in charge of  
23 taking care of any of our forests. So these smaller  
24 state forests are so much more important, and we  
25 need to take care of them more.

1 I know one part of Jacoby Falls is  
2 that natural gas pipeline there. And that, in my  
3 opinion, is my least favorite part, because it  
4 brings you back to reality when you're trying to  
5 escape. When you're hiking, you're escaping from  
6 this industrialization, all of this technology. But  
7 then you have to be reminded of this  
8 industrialization, this modernization, just cutting  
9 straight through the beautiful wilderness that we  
10 have around us. Thank you.

11 MS. LEHMAN: Thank you.

12 Okay, the next speaker is Andrea  
13 Homit, followed by Margaret Cronin and Ruth Steck.  
14 Andrea, I do not see. I do not see Andrea by name,  
15 and she did not provide me a phone number, so I'm  
16 thinking she's probably not here. If you are here,  
17 Andrea, please raise your hand or get in touch with  
18 us. Otherwise, we're going to move on to Margaret  
19 Cronin.

20 All right, I'm unmuting you,  
21 Margaret. And you can unmute on your end. Margaret,  
22 you are shown as muted from your end, so if you can  
23 unmute your device, you're welcome to start anytime.

24

25 Have we heard from Margaret?

1                   MS. MEADE: No.

2                   MS. LEHMAN: Okay. Oh, she's on now.  
3 She's got it.

4                   Go ahead, Margaret. Sorry about  
5 that.

6                   MS. CRONIN: Thank you.

7                   Margaret Cronin, M-A-R-G-A-R-E-T,  
8 C-R-O-N-I-N.

9                   Dad Dad Chapman Trail, Jacoby Falls,  
10 Loyalsock Creek. I have biked, hiked, swum, bird  
11 watched and rejuvenated in these trails and  
12 waterways of the Loyalsock Forest. I say this as if  
13 to credential my worthiness to comment on PGE's  
14 Saluda application, but the basic fact that I am a  
15 resident who drinks from this watershed and breathes  
16 our air is warrant enough to speak on the  
17 inadvisability of this proposed site.

18                   DEP's own regulations state that DEP  
19 cannot issue a permit for a project that has a  
20 significant adverse impact on a wetland unless the  
21 project is necessary to abate a substantial threat  
22 to public health or safety. PGE's proposed project  
23 area is a core forest public natural resource with  
24 exceptional value waters and wetlands throughout.  
25 Nothing in this permit application supports a

1 finding that the Saluda project is necessary to  
2 abate a substantial threat to public health and  
3 safety. Rather, industrial degradation resulting  
4 from the Saluda project would create a substantial  
5 threat to the health and safety of all beings in the  
6 vicinity.

7                   Moreover, the Saluda Project will  
8 have a significant adverse impact on exceptional  
9 value wetlands that are part of constitutionally  
10 protected forest land that DEP and DCNR have a  
11 charge to conserve. In accordance with Article 1,  
12 Section 27 of the PA Constitution, neither DEP nor  
13 DCNR can authorize the loss of these public natural  
14 resources. The Chapter 105 permit review process  
15 does not in any way circumvent DEP's law, legal and  
16 constitutional mandate to conserve and maintain  
17 these exceptional forest and wetland resources.

18                   Furthermore, PGE claims that the only  
19 public trail needing protection is the Jacoby Falls  
20 Trail. In truth, Saluda Pad B would block Dad Dad  
21 Chapman Trail, a multi-use trail many use to access  
22 Jacoby Falls from the top of Jacoby Mountain. PGE's  
23 failure to acknowledge the Dad Dad Chapman as a  
24 state forest trail that belongs to PA Citizens is in  
25 the least negligent and at worst bad faith

1 negotiation with our state officials.

2 I ask this of the men and women who  
3 work for DEP. Abide by the mission stated on your  
4 website, which says our mission is to protect  
5 Pennsylvania's air, land and water resources while  
6 ensuring the health and safety of all residents and  
7 visitors to the Commonwealth. Please fulfill your  
8 charge by honoring the logic and integrity of your  
9 own mission and regulations. We need you to truly  
10 be the Department of Environmental Protection, not  
11 the department of excessive permission for corporate  
12 interests. Interests that too often undermine the  
13 health of our beloved Commonwealth and all who live  
14 within it. Thank you so much for your time.

15 MS. LEHMAN: Thank you. I'm sorry I  
16 was not quite quick enough to stop the buzzer from  
17 going off there. Thank you, Margaret.

18 Our next speaker is Ruth Steck.  
19 Ruth, you are enabled on our end. Can you unmute?  
20 So there may be a mute button or a speaker button or  
21 like a little microphone icon on your device. It  
22 does appear you are still muted on our - on your  
23 end. Ruth, I'm going to give you some time to try  
24 to figure that out and maybe we'll move on to the  
25 next person here.

1 Gary Metzger is the next in line.  
2 Gary, let's unmute you. He is - here we go. You  
3 are unmuted on our end, Gary. So, Gary Metzger, if  
4 you can hear me, please unmute on your end. It's  
5 your turn to speak.

6 Okay. The next couple people. Just  
7 so you're aware, actually, there are three more  
8 after Gary. We have Brook Lenker, Aidan Gscheidle  
9 and Matthew Barth.

10 All right. Gary, I am not - we're  
11 not having any luck with you either. All right,  
12 let's - we'll give some time to try to work out Ruth  
13 and Gary and see if we can reach them.

14 Brook Lenker, are you available?  
15 Let's see. Okay, I am not seeing Brook on the list  
16 here.

17 MR. LENKER: Can you hear me?

18 MS. LEHMAN: Okay, now I can hear  
19 you. Yep.

20 MR. LENKER: Okay, thank you.

21 MS. LEHMAN: Okay, please spell your  
22 name for the record and then you can start.

23 MR. LENKER: Yep. My name is Brook  
24 Lenker and it's spelled B-R-O-O-K, last name  
25 L-E-N-K-E-R.

1 Can I start?

2 MS. LEHMAN: Yes.

3 MR. LENKER: Okay.

4 So my name is - my name is Brook  
5 Lanker and I'm the Executive Director of Keystone  
6 Trails Association, or KTA. We're an organization  
7 that promotes and protects hiking trails and hiking  
8 opportunities in Pennsylvania.

9 Before I came to KTA over four years  
10 ago, I directed the Frack Tracker Alliance, an  
11 organization that maps and studies the impacts of  
12 natural gas extraction in Pennsylvania and across  
13 the country. In that capacity for nearly a decade,  
14 I witnessed the ceaseless degradation of the  
15 environment caused by fracked gas development. It  
16 sickens me to think of the thousands upon thousands  
17 of repetitive violations and accidents committed by  
18 this industry. It's merely a daily occurrence. The  
19 industry's legacy is dystopian, leaving a wake of  
20 spills, leaks, habitat destruction and fugitive  
21 emissions. People are sickened, the quality of life  
22 eroded.

23 The residents of the Loyalsock Valley  
24 have already endured way too much angst from living  
25 near the truck traffic, noise, pollutional events,

1 deforestation, devastation and uncertainty over what  
2 comes next.

3                   The Loyalsock State Forest is a wild  
4 respite loved by so many Pennsylvanians. The  
5 Loyalsock Creek is one of the favorite rivers in the  
6 state and was declared river of the year in 2018.  
7 The headwater streams in the path of PGE's plans  
8 feed that very river.

9                   When will the DEP actually say no,  
10 not here? At stake are treasured resources  
11 performing essential ecological functions. Access  
12 roads, well pads and pipelines have no rightful  
13 place on these public lands. The proposed actions  
14 inherently violate everyone's right to clean air,  
15 pure water and to the preservation of the natural,  
16 scenic and aesthetic values of the environment.  
17 Enough is enough.

18                   The Commonwealth is making  
19 significant investments in trails and outdoor  
20 recreation. But industrializing our forests and  
21 waters sullies the outdoors and the outdoor  
22 experience. PGE's development scheme is contrary,  
23 absolutely antithetical to the goal of a more  
24 verdant, sustainable and beckoning Commonwealth.  
25 Please deny a Chapter 105 permit for this

1 unnecessary project. Thank you.

2 MS. LEHMAN: Thank you, Brook. And I  
3 apologize. I must have misspelled your name on my  
4 record there and tried to add an extra letter that  
5 didn't exist. So thank you for correcting that.

6 So I think we might have Gary ready  
7 to go here. Let's try again. I'm going to unmute  
8 him.

9 Okay, Gary, you are unmuted on our  
10 end, so you'll have to unmute on your end.

11 MR. METZGER: Can you hear me now?

12 MS. LEHMAN: Now we can. Thank you  
13 so much and please proceed.

14 MR. METZGER: Thanks.

15 Okay, I am Gary Metzger, G-A-R-Y,  
16 M-E-T-Z-G-E-R, and I am past president of the  
17 Lycoming Audubon Society. I worked for 32 years or  
18 so with the Department of Environmental Protection  
19 in the Water Quality Management Program out of the  
20 Williamsport office. And maybe most importantly, my  
21 wife and I lived on our 68 acre farm adjoining the  
22 Loyalsock State Forest, maybe three miles east of  
23 this proposed project site. We're on the east side  
24 of the Loyalsock Creek.

25 So most of what I had to say and more

1 has already been said and better than I could say  
2 it, I think. And I agree with most of the speakers,  
3 and I think that this is the wrong project in the  
4 wrong place. And I think that the Chapter 105  
5 permit application should be denied or disapproved.  
6 I'll talk a minute about forest fragmentation, I  
7 think, which is what hits me most about projects  
8 like this.

9                   So Bruce talked about the impact on  
10 birds' populations and breeding, and that is a big  
11 deal. And I think it applies to amphibians and lots  
12 of other creatures as well. The loss of forest  
13 canopy, something that hasn't been mentioned too  
14 much I think, the forest canopy in place helps the  
15 ground, the forest floor, absorb water. It cuts  
16 down on runoff. So we're going to take out the  
17 forest canopy on this 3.9 mile and all the pads and  
18 whatnot. And we all know that we're getting more  
19 extreme rain events with some regularity. So  
20 there's going to be a lot of runoff. The road  
21 itself is going to be an impervious surface, so all  
22 of that water is going to run off.

23                   Folks who have lived in the valley,  
24 the Loyalsock Valley, know about flooding events,  
25 severe flooding events. And I think that projects

1 like this, taking a road up this stream valley,  
2 you're just bringing more runoff, a path down the  
3 streams to wreck the ecology of these trout streams  
4 and blast into Wallis Run and the Loyalsock and add  
5 to those kinds of problems. So I would add that.  
6 Wrong project, wrong place. Thanks so much.

7 MS. LEHMAN: Thank you very much.  
8 Okay, so Gary, I'm going to - I'm going to mute you  
9 again and the next person, let's see if we can try  
10 again with Ruth. I'm going to see if she's on here.

11 MS. STECK: Okay. Are you there?

12 MS. LEHMAN: We've got you, Ruth.  
13 Thank you so much. Please go ahead.

14 MS. STECK: Thank you so much.

15 My name is Ruth, R-U-T-H, Steck,  
16 S-T-E-C-K.

17 Pennsylvania General Energy has  
18 submitted an application for significant  
19 industrialization of a unique and beloved portion of  
20 the Loyalsock State Forest. The entire acreage  
21 included in the Saluda project serves as source  
22 water for the Loyalsock Creek, which carries  
23 exceptional value designation.

24 Under DEP's own Chapter 105  
25 regulations, to repeat what others have said before

1 me, which are the focus of this hearing, DEP cannot  
2 issue a permit for a project that has a significant  
3 adverse impact on a wetland unless the project is  
4 necessary to abate a substantial threat to public  
5 health or safety.

6           To deny the this permit, as is what  
7 should happen, would be to comply with the agency's  
8 mission and obligations to the citizens of  
9 Pennsylvania. Denying the permit would not only be  
10 a great gift to these citizen owners of these  
11 Commonwealth lands, but also to the nation and to  
12 the world writ large, as continued extraction of  
13 fossil gas is complicit in the greatest existential  
14 threat humanity faces.

15           Our planet's life support systems are  
16 collapsing at an ever accelerating rate.  
17 Permafrost is thawing, ice sheets are destabilizing.  
18 Floods and fires are ever increasing and ocean  
19 currents are weakening. These aren't distant  
20 threats, they're happening now, accelerated by  
21 policies designed to favor corporate profits over  
22 the urgent need to craft a truly sustainable human  
23 future.

24           Speaking in April 2024, Ban Ki-moon,  
25 former UN Secretary General, not only reminded his

1 audience that climate change is the single greatest  
2 threat to a sustainable future, he also said a  
3 powerful truth that addressing the climate challenge  
4 presents a golden opportunity to promote prosperity,  
5 security and a brighter future for all. Time is  
6 running out and the climate does not negotiate.  
7 Surely future generations will judge us not by our  
8 divisive politics, tweets and culture wars, but by  
9 whether we protected their right to a livable  
10 planet.

11 I urge DEP to enforce the very  
12 regulations this agency is obligated to uphold and  
13 deny the significant and illegal degradation that  
14 would surely come from PGE's proposed Saluda  
15 project.

16 MS. LEHMAN: Thank you very much,  
17 Ruth. We'll get you muted.

18 Okay, and we have actually three more  
19 people registered and I'm just going to take a  
20 moment here to check on something. The last three  
21 we have are Aidan Gscheidle - and I apologize, I'm  
22 going to get some of these names wrong, like I said.  
23 Matthew Bahr and I'm actually - Brian Wagner. We  
24 had missed him on the list by mistake, but he was  
25 pre registered. So those are the three remaining

1 speakers.

2 I did just want to say if there is  
3 anybody else who had requested to speak and for  
4 whatever reason your name's not on the list, if you  
5 could contact Lisa here in the next few minutes, we  
6 could add, you know, if that is the case. There  
7 were quite a few people who reached out to me and  
8 asked to sign - to register to attend, but did not  
9 specify that they wanted to speak. And I did  
10 respond to each person individually, but I know some  
11 had not gotten back to me about whether they wanted  
12 to speak or not. So I just want to make sure that  
13 in good faith effort, if there was anybody who  
14 believed when you came here tonight that you were  
15 pre registered and you were not on the list, please  
16 let Lisa know and we can use our discretionary to  
17 add you.

18 Okay, so Aidan would be next.

19 MR. GSCHEIDLE: Yes, can you hear me?

20 MS. LEHMAN: We can hear you, yes.

21 Please proceed.

22 MR. GSCHEIDLE: Thank you for your  
23 time everyone. My name is Aidan Gscheidle. That's  
24 A-I-D-A-N, G-S-C-H-E-I-D-L-E. I'm a small business  
25 owner and a licensed massage therapist in Lock Haven

1 and a former resident of Williamsport, Pennsylvania.

2 I've lived in this region of  
3 Pennsylvania for my entire life. Like many here, I  
4 grew up in Loyalsock State Forest. Jacoby Falls is  
5 a special place to me. As the state website itself  
6 says, it is one of Pennsylvania's prettiest  
7 waterfalls. It is alarming to hear it is under  
8 threat.

9 There are folks on this call who are  
10 more ecologically minded than me, who have spoken  
11 quite eloquently on behalf Jacoby's non-human  
12 inhabitants. Our neighbors the trout, the birds,  
13 the waterfall, the snakes, the ferns, and I will add  
14 the newts. But I myself would like to tell you  
15 about some of the humans who spend time at Jacoby.

16 I have a friend who is a registered  
17 nurse at UPMC. On more than one occasion I've  
18 listened to her tell me about the exhausting and  
19 sometimes traumatizing realities of working in  
20 healthcare, especially during the pandemic. She has  
21 had people die in her arms. She goes to Jacoby  
22 Falls routinely to find solace and rejuvenation.

23 I have another friend who is in  
24 healthcare as a dietitian working with the dialysis  
25 community. She too has horror stories and feels

1 chronically burnt out. She too goes to Jacoby Falls  
2 for rest and restoration.

3 I have another friend who is in the  
4 field of mental health. He frequently takes his  
5 young son to Jacoby Falls to get away and spend time  
6 in nature.

7 And one more friend who introduced me  
8 to Jacoby Falls. She's in food service. When I met  
9 her we were both working two jobs and I believe  
10 she's actually juggling three. We were opening for  
11 breakfast at 5:00 a.m. and then bartending until  
12 12:00 or 12:30 at night. Just like my other  
13 friends, she routinely goes to Jacoby Falls for much  
14 needed R and R.

15 All of these folks I've mentioned are  
16 in the reproductive sector. They serve the critical  
17 function of keeping us alive and helping us restore  
18 when we're hungry, suicidal or sick. They're the  
19 ground level. They provide basic life support, but  
20 who supports them? The answer is nature does. It  
21 is well documented that spending time in nature,  
22 taking a break from the grind is vital for human  
23 flourishing. I have 11 empirical studies in front  
24 of me that report that nature is among the top  
25 places that people experience an expanded sense of

1 well-being and connection to a higher or wider  
2 power.

3                   Part of what makes nature, nature, is  
4 that it is natural, that it doesn't have a road or a  
5 gas pad or chemicals, trucks and cranes 600 feet  
6 away. You wouldn't want these things near your own  
7 house or your church if you're trying to nap or  
8 mourn or pray. We are already in danger of losing  
9 our natural places. This isn't about people's  
10 hobbies. This is about people's health. This has  
11 long term consequences for all of us.

12                   So for the sake of our nurses,  
13 servers, healers and anyone else who goes to Jacoby  
14 Falls to easily access and enjoy the woods and soak  
15 in nature, it must be left alone. Please deny this  
16 permit. Thank you.

17                   MS. LEHMAN: Okay. Thank you, Aidan.

18                   Matthew Barth is next. I do not see  
19 Matthew on the list. So let's check to see if he's  
20 joined by phone. I do not see Matthew Barth. So  
21 we'll skip ahead to our final registered speaker at  
22 this time and then we'll - I'll go back, give one  
23 more opportunity for the three folks that were not  
24 on the call.

25                   So Brian Wagner, are you here?

1 Brian, I am unmuting you. Okay, go ahead and unmute  
2 yourself.

3 MR. WAGNER: Can you hear me?

4 MS. LEHMAN: We can hear you very  
5 good. Thank you.

6 MR. WAGNER: Can you hear me?

7 MS. LEHMAN: Yep, we can hear you.

8 MR. WAGNER: Okay, good.

9 Brian Wagner, I'm representing the  
10 Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited. B-R-I-A-N,  
11 W-A-G-N-E-R.

12 The Pennsylvania Council of Trout  
13 Unlimited with its 12,000 members is a conservation  
14 organization committed to the protection and  
15 preservation of our exceptionally valuable cold  
16 water natural resources and their supporting  
17 wetlands. We welcome this opportunity to testify at  
18 this hearing.

19 We believe there are significant  
20 unacceptable risks and cumulative effects of a large  
21 number of permanent impacts in disturbed areas which  
22 will degrade important and irreplaceable EV streams  
23 and wetlands inherent in PGE's proposed project as  
24 presented.

25 DCNR and DEP are required by Chapter

1 93 and 25 PA Code Section 105.18a in the  
2 Pennsylvania Constitution under Article 1, Section  
3 27, to act as a trustee to protect and preserve EV  
4 streams and wetlands of the Commonwealth from  
5 degradation. And therefore the permit application  
6 as presented should be denied.

7 Our concerns will be presented in  
8 writing also, but summarized as follows.

9 The subject PGE permit application  
10 supporting documents enumerate dozens of references  
11 to exceptional value streams and wetlands which will  
12 be permanently impacted, and that the proposal  
13 turned as chosen and proposed construction methods  
14 and BMPs to be used will only minimize but not  
15 eliminate impacts and degradation of those  
16 resources. No data or explanations are presented  
17 which support those practices as equivalent to  
18 elimination or prevention of degradation.

19 No alternatives are presented which  
20 consider siting drilling pads and associated  
21 infrastructure on adjacent private lands, not DCNR  
22 and state forest lands. In order to access the  
23 subject gas lease area, such an approach has been  
24 used by EQT to access gas leases in the nearby  
25 Clarence Moore tracks on Burnett's Ridge and

1 Pleasant Stream areas without surface disturbances  
2 to state forest lands. Why is the apparent starting  
3 point for DCNR's review and comments limited to the  
4 pad locations optimal to PGE?

5 As required by 25 PA Code Section  
6 105.18a, paragraph six, PGE must affirmatively  
7 demonstrate in writing and the DEP must issue a  
8 written finding that the cumulative effect of this  
9 proposed project and other projects will not impair  
10 the Commonwealth's EV wetland resources.

11 The application information indicates  
12 that the DCNR has worked with an approved proposed  
13 alternative with PGE. How does DCNR justifies its  
14 approval to this extensive gas development project  
15 on such an exceptional intact and undeveloped  
16 important core forest ecosystem when there may be  
17 alternative methods now technologically possible to  
18 access the gas lease area from outside the subject  
19 state forest lease tract and avoid the impacts and  
20 degradations to EV streams or wetlands?

21 And I'm just about out of time, so  
22 I'll stop there. Thank you.

23 MS. LEHMAN: Okay, thank you very  
24 much, Brian. We'll get you muted.

25 And so the other three folks that had

1 registered, we have not seen any sign of them on the  
2 call. So at this point I think that is going to  
3 conclude our speakers.

4 I want to thank everyone for your  
5 patience as, especially with the technical problems  
6 that we had. We managed to power through. So  
7 everybody who was present on the call who had pre  
8 registered was able to speak today. Again, thank  
9 you all for your time in doing that. I'm going to  
10 get out of this clock timer here and we'll put up  
11 our final slide.

12 Okay, so Derek, if you could put the  
13 remaining slide or slides up, please.

14 So we are concluding tonight's public  
15 hearing. Again, thank you for joining us and for  
16 your comments. DEP appreciates your interest in  
17 this matter. And please check that webpage that I  
18 listed earlier for future information. Most of you  
19 were in email contact with me, so if you don't  
20 already have that and you can't find it, feel free  
21 to write back to me and I'll make sure you get that  
22 link. The transcript from tonight's hearing will be  
23 posted on that webpage once it becomes available.  
24 And again, thanks for everyone's participation.  
25 Good night.

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HEARING CONCLUDED AT 5:28 P.M.

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CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify, as the stenographic reporter, that the foregoing proceedings were taken stenographically by me, and thereafter reduced to typewriting by me or under my direction; and that this transcript is a true and accurate record to the best of my ability.

Dated the 6th day of February, 2026



Corey Riner,  
Court Reporter