

House Majority Policy Committee Hearing
September 29, 2011
Doylestown, Pennsylvania

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Marcellus Shale – Engineering and Environmental Consulting Perspective

Representative Quinn and members of the House Majority Policy Committee, good morning. On behalf of my company, Langan Engineering and Environmental Services, Inc., I am glad to participate in this local event. I say local because I live 15 minutes away from our current meeting place and my primary office is located five minutes from here. The purpose of my testimony today is to share the knowledge I have gained over the past couple years regarding the Marcellus Shale industry. This knowledge was gained through continuous education, research and professional involvement with the industry over the past two years.

As I began to research, I quickly learned there are divided lines of interest – those who oppose the development of the gas, and those who embrace it. As a scientist, my beliefs are guided by my understanding of facts and true science, and so for the past two years, I have sought to understand the technology and operations of the industry.

I first learned about the Marcellus Shale while looking for personal investment property in northern Pennsylvania. Upon educating myself further, I quickly learned of the significant, beneficial impact this shale play could have on not just our Commonwealth, but our country as a whole. These benefits come in the form of new American jobs, spreading of wealth, cleaner air, national energy independence and improved national security. As with all other forms of energy development, shale gas development has some impact on the environment, and I believe the environmental impacts associated with shale gas development are manageable but challenging. Responsible and sustainable development will rely heavily on sound engineering and strict regulation, and that's why my company got involved.

My company, Langan, is a multi-disciplined engineering and environmental consulting firm that has been supporting land development and environmental projects throughout the Commonwealth for more than 30 years. Prior to the development of the Marcellus Shale, we had three offices here in the eastern side of the state. In 2010, amidst a recession, we opened a fourth Pennsylvania office in Canonsburg, PA to adapt to the changing business climate affecting our industry. The Canonsburg office lies above the Marcellus fairway just outside of the city of Pittsburgh and is expected to be one of our fastest growing offices because of the economic activity occurring in that region. This activity is directly related to the Marcellus gas industry operations.

Langan is currently providing site design, permitting and survey services to a few natural gas producers in the Marcellus region. Our engineers and scientists who work on these projects are located throughout our Pennsylvania offices, including our office in Warrington, PA five minutes from here.

The majority of the services we provide to the gas industry are driven by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) regulations under its Oil and Gas Program. There seems to be a common misconception that Pennsylvania is not strictly regulating the industry. The fact is that Pennsylvania has one of the most stringent regulatory programs in the country governing the industry. Pennsylvania is also quickly adapting to ensure that the challenges associated with this new drilling technology are met with new regulation. Compliance with the regulations cannot be policed without enforcement, and Pennsylvania has been increasing its site inspection and enforcement activities at Marcellus sites, primarily through the addition of new staff in these departments. The PADEP recently reported that inspections are occurring at each Marcellus site at an average frequency of once every two weeks. This frequency far exceeds the average inspection frequency at construction and industrial sites outside the industry. The industry is also policing itself because they want to build sustainable businesses that will operate throughout the duration of the play, which could last well beyond the next 50 years. The industry, through its member associations and coalition, is also introspectively reviewing its practices and is constantly developing new best management practices to lessen the impacts of its operations.

I believe Pennsylvania is at the forefront of developing a regulatory program that will serve as a model program for the responsible and sustainable development of shale gas resources in other states and countries around the world. The biggest challenge facing this new technology and energy development, now and into the future, is addressing public perception through education. Just about every day, I speak with someone who has formed an opinion on the Marcellus Shale gas play, and quite often the opinions are negative. One thing I've discovered is that each and every person I speak with has questions – questions that deserve factual and scientific answers and explanations. In closing, I feel that society needs to take a closer look at the sources of energy that we consume in our every day lives, and understand where and how the natural gas, oil and gasoline we use is derived.