

**BOARD OF  
COMMISSIONERS**

**Pam Snyder**  
Chairman  
psnyder@co.greene.pa.us

**Archie Trader**  
Commissioner  
atrader@co.greene.pa.us

**Charles J. Morris**  
Commissioner  
cmorris@co.greene.pa.us



93 E. High Street • Waynesburg, Pennsylvania 15370  
PHONE: 724-852-5210 • FAX: 724-627-5428  
www.co.greene.pa.us

**Jeffrey A. Marshall**  
Chief Clerk  
jmarshall@co.greene.pa.us

---

Legal Counsel  
**Cheryl Cowen**

*Marcellus Shale Testimony  
Presented to the  
Pennsylvania House Democratic Policy Committee*

*By*

*Greene County Commissioner Pam Snyder*

*Waynesburg Central High School, Waynesburg, PA  
Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2011*

Good afternoon. I am Commissioner Pam Snyder, chairman of the Greene County Board of Commissioners. On behalf of my colleagues, Commissioner Archie Trader and Commissioner Chuck Morris, I would like to thank Representative Sturla and the members of the Pennsylvania House Democratic Policy Committee for the privilege of speaking before you.

Today I offer my testimony regarding Marcellus Shale drilling activities in the Commonwealth and the impact this industry is having on our residents, our land, and our environment. Personally and professionally, I remain neutral on this issue with respect to the many opportunities and concerns Marcellus Shale drilling presents.

In 2011 so far, more than 90 Marcellus Shale permits have been issued and nearly 40 wells have been drilled in Greene County. Out of 67 counties, we have the sixth highest number of permits and wells, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. In Southwestern Pennsylvania, we are second only to Washington County in terms of permits issued and wells drilled. It is safe to say that Greene County is one of the counties leading the way in the Marcellus Shale boom. However, from my perspective, every opportunity presents a challenge, and every challenge presents an opportunity.

We have been fortunate to receive an economic boost from drilling activities, not the least of which has been a variety of family-sustaining job opportunities. Greene County's unemployment rate, as of May 2011, is 7 percent. Our civilian labor force includes 18,300 people, and energy companies are some of our largest employers in the county.

Related to the increase in jobs, several local educational and career agencies have established workforce development programs tailored to the needs of the drilling companies. We have a bona fide industry for which we can adequately educate, train, and prepare our residents for employment entirely within the county. The educational value is limitless. Our county's service

industries – from excavating companies to general stores – have also experienced economic benefits, and many of our local charities and non-profits have been grateful recipients of drilling company donations and support.

However, the Marcellus Shale drilling boom has succeeded in bringing to the forefront our existing infrastructure issues within Greene County. In just a few short years, our county has experienced growth not only in drilling activities, but also an influx of workers. Our hotels are constantly operating at near-capacity, and our already strained housing availabilities have been reduced. While we anticipate the construction of two new hotels in Waynesburg, we recognize that hotel rooms are a short-term solution to our long-term housing problem.

Drilling has also negatively impacted the quality of our roads and bridges, as we have heavier vehicles more frequently traveling these smaller roads and bridges that were not built to accommodate such loads. The frequent travel has also led to increased congestion in certain areas of the county and creates the potential for more traffic accidents. First responders in the county may also have a more difficult time responding to well site incidents, which has required far greater coordination and efforts on the parts of our emergency management department, municipal emergency services, and Southwest Regional Medical Center staff.

Perhaps the biggest issue that Marcellus Shale drilling has brought to the forefront of public consciousness is its effect on our environment and the quality and adequacy of water. With such an increased usage of water, a great potential exists that our water authorities' supply simply cannot keep up with the drilling companies' demand and that our residents will more frequently find themselves out of water.

As commissioner, one of the biggest county-wide issues I have consistently faced since Marcellus Shale drilling began is water quality. I know that many of our residents are concerned

that drilling companies are polluting our water supply by disposing of waste brine and other drilling byproducts or allowing surface or stormwater run-off to enter streams and other water sources. Drilling has also negatively impacted those who live closest to well sites and other affected locations. We have heard from many residents who live in close proximity to well sites and especially compressor stations about the nearly unbearable noise level created by drilling activities. In addition to ruining the peace and quiet that many of our county's residents are accustomed to, such noise is no doubt driving neighboring property values down. It is evident that the construction and location of compressor stations and buildings, as well as associated noise levels, needs to be restricted so that these activities are not adversely impacting our county's property values and creating a literal headache for our residents.

Needless to say, the many challenges that Marcellus Shale drilling presents may be too much for individual municipalities and counties to handle. We are greatly in need of the regulatory capacity and streamlined oversight that the state can provide, while recognizing that the state must also do its part by increasing its own capacity and manpower necessary for this growing industry. We as a county rely on the state for regulatory power – and specifically, environmental protection – because counties lack the authority and oversight to regulate industry. Counties impacted by Marcellus Shale drilling will only benefit from a more broad-based and consistent approach to regulating this industry that provides us with safeguards. Our protection is vital to the future growth of drilling in the Commonwealth.

As an added protection, I am strongly in favor of imposing an impact tax on the natural gas drilling industry in Pennsylvania. We alone do not have the resources or steady funding streams to possibly keep up with the local impacts of Marcellus Shale drilling, nor can we allow for every issue that may arise. We need dedicated funding to address these impacts, an assurance of

its availability, and added stability and accountability to protect our communities and their residents. Each impacted county deserves a proportionate share of an impact tax to be used for restoring and strengthening road, bridge, water, and sewer infrastructure, for increases in public health and safety services, and for relieving the burden on individual taxpayers.

In just a few short years, the Marcellus Shale drilling industry has dramatically transformed the Commonwealth, creating a vast number of opportunities and presenting a number of serious issues. And we've only just begun. We as a state need to be more prepared on every level, not just for more growth, but we must also be ready to control that growth, to have a say in what is being done and how. My appeal to you today is to figure out how to embrace this industry, how to make it work *for* us, and not *against* us.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you here today.