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James Martin
Chief, Office of Oil & Gas
WV Dept. of Environmental Protection
601 57th St. SE
Charleston, WV 25304

Dear Mr. Martin,

This letter is to support the positions taken by SORO, the Surface Owners Rights Organization, comments dated April 28, 2010, and regarding reconsideration of current rules. I am a surface and mineral owner in the counties of Doddridge, Pocahontas, and Greenbrier, and a member of the WV Highlands Conservancy, SORO, and Greenbrier River Watershed Association as well as other environmental organizations.

Due to the frack fluid spill in Doddridge county almost a year ago, which never resulted in a real explanation of how it occurred, people in the Doddridge and Harrison county area have been reaching out to me in particular, as a person to help them understand what is going on with their land. In addition to all of the points SORO has laid out, I am finding that the poorest of the poor and the elderly especially, are having trouble dealing with the psychological trauma that incurs when a drilling company shows up at their door with a notice that they are going to tear up 5 – 6 acres of their land to drill a Marcellus well. For many people, their land is everything to them.

I was asked by an older woman who lives near the Doddridge and Harrison county line, to come look at her family property and help her understand what is going to happen to it. This lady is 68 years old, worked all of her life for the gas company, CNG, and retired to her family property and takes care of an even older sister and brother. She has no children or other family to help her, and has already had @ 6 wells drilled on her property. She does not own any of the mineral rights. Though she has 55 acres of land, the drilling company has surveyed a spot to place the marcellus well drilling right next to her house in her beautiful meadow. When she asked if perhaps they could drill at the other end of her meadow, she said she is met with that “deer in the headlight look”. I drove her up the road past her property where she pointed out erosion problems, felled trees that are uncompensated for (as of yet) road slides, torn up roads jarring her old car, and extreme noise pollution from other marcellus wells being drilled, all along a formerly pristine stream. She showed me a map of the Scioto Indian trail, which follows this same route, and has Indian artifacts on her property. I guess areas of historical significance are also exempt from gas drilling rules. Her tears fell as she explained that her fear is that she, and her older brother and sister will not live to know peace and quiet again. If she would need to sell her property if she would get sick, as a means to fund her health care, who would buy her property? Then she took me past a friends house, who is currently experiencing the same problems with active drilling occurring on his property. He becomes so agitated and despondent when the subject is brought up, she can no longer talk to him, and he rarely leaves his house now. All of his work toward retirement and enjoying his farm has been for this.

I urge you to help West Virginia rise above it's reputation as a state that will not make changes to rules that favor industrial exploitation and at the expense of the poor. Yes there is money to be made and some have made it big and that gas royalty check helps a lot of people make ends meet. But many eyes are watching this process all around the country. All of these issues will not go away, whether it be surface owner notification, pollution of our waters, the revelation of frack fluid chemicals, or lack of adequate inspectors. If no changes are made, these issues will be brought to your table again and again. This is the time to let West Virginia become the state that others look *to*, instead of down upon. This is history in the making, please let it be history to be proud of.

Thanks very much,
Louanne McConnell Fatora