

# Join calls for moratorium on permits

**BY BARBARA FLEISCHAUER  
AND MIKE MANYPENNY**

Everyone in our state will soon be affected in some way by Marcellus shale gas drilling. Stacey Haney's experiences tell what can happen if we don't get gas regulations right. When she leased her gas last year, the operator showed her pretty pictures and told her everything would be fine. It wasn't.

First, local roads were destroyed. She and her family became ill and animals started dying — two dogs, a horse, and the children's goat. She began to suspect their water and the fumes from the nearby chemical waste pond and compressors were poisoning them. Her son edged toward liver failure. After testing, their blood showed high levels of toxic chemicals, including arsenic, toluene and benzene.

Stacey Haney's story convinced us we were right to ask the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to stop issuing new Marcellus drilling permits until a new law is passed.

We are pleased that the city of Lewisburg and *The Dominion Post* have joined in our request for a moratorium on new permits.

To be absolutely clear, we are not asking for a moratorium on all gas drilling.

The Marcellus gas shale industry represents enormous possibilities for our citizens and our

## **GUEST COMMENTARY**

state. But it must be done responsibly. It is physically impossible for 15 field inspectors to monitor 59,000 permitted wells — of which more than 900 were granted for Marcellus shale drilling in the past two years. The DEP desperately needs funding for new inspectors, which should come from the regulated industry.

Why were we unsuccessful in passing legislation? Primarily because the industry lost interest when both Houses refused to include "forced pooling," which means that even if you have not leased your gas, you must participate in the drilling if a majority of your neighbors do.

Another complication was the upcoming gubernatorial primary, with the acting governor, acting Senate president and Speaker of the House all running for governor.

Along with the two of us, the following bipartisan group of delegates signed onto our letter requesting a moratorium on new Marcellus gas well permits: Linda Longstreth, D-Marion; Larry Barker, D-Boone; Bonnie Brown, D-Kanawha; Danny Wells, D-Kanawha; Anthony Barill, D-Monongalia; Dale Martin, D-Putnam; Don Perdue, D-Wayne; Mary Poling, D-Barbour; Clif Moore, D-McDowell; Harold Pete

Sigler, R-Nicholas; Margaret Stagers, D-Fayette; Joe Talbott, D-Webster; John Doyle, D-Jefferson; Ray Canterbury, R-Greenbrier; Virginia Mahan, D-Summers; Nancy Guthrie, D-Kanawha; Dan Poling, D-Wood; Barbara Hatfield, D-Kanawha; Ruth Rowan, R-Hampshire; Rick Snuffer, R-Raleigh; and Roger Romine, R-Tyler.

We call on our fellow leaders in the Legislature to hammer out an agreement on Marcellus legislation. Once agreement is reached, we urge the acting governor to call a special session after the gubernatorial primary.

Please encourage other delegates and senators to join in our request for a new permit moratorium and ask gubernatorial candidates where they stand on a new permit moratorium and a special session. And don't forget to vote.

The primary race for governor is May 14 and the election is Oct. 4. The regular election, when all of the seats for House of Delegates and half of the Senate seats are open, is in 2012.

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