



## **RIVERTOWNCOALITION**

FOR CLEAN AIR AND CLEAN WATER

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Dear Members of the Board and Staff Leaders of SEDA-COG.

To understand what was most important to the people of our region about natural gas production, Dr. Mark Heuer, Vice-President of the Rivertown Coalition, and a professor at Susquehanna University conducted a survey of stakeholders in our area to ascertain the interests and concerns regarding natural gas production in the Marcellus Shale Region and Susquehanna River Valley. The survey data and interpretations of data were double-blind reviewed and published as: Heuer, M., Lee, Z. C. 2014. Marcellus Shale Development and the Susquehanna River: An Exploratory Analysis of Cross-Sector Attitudes on Natural Gas Hydraulic Fracturing." *Organization & Environment*, 27(1):25-42. The survey focused on the business, government, and nonprofit sectors (SEDA COG was contacted). The findings were similar among all three sectors in terms of ranking safety and health ahead of economic growth as it relates to natural gas hydraulic fracturing.

For this reason we would like to highlight some of our concerns about the health impacts of the gas industry. The following comes from page 71 of the report we sent last week. July 15, 2015 – A study by University of Pennsylvania and Columbia University researchers found that drilling and fracking activity was associated with increased rates of hospitalization in Pennsylvania. During a period of dramatic increase in drilling and fracking activity between 2007 and 2011, inpatient prevalence rates surged for people living near shale gas wells. Cardiology inpatient prevalence rates were significantly associated with number of wells per zip code and their density, while neurology inpatient prevalence rates were significantly associated with density of wells. Hospitalizations for cancer, skin conditions, and urological problems also rose significantly. During the same time period, no such increase in health problems was observed in a control Pennsylvania county without any drilling and fracking activity. In communities with the most wells, the rate of cardiology hospitalizations was 27 percent higher than in control communities with no fracking. "While the clinical significance of the association remains to be shown, [fracking] has just begun in Pennsylvania, and thus observing a significant association over this short time is striking.... Our study also supports the concept that health care utilization should be factored into the value (costs and benefits) of hydraulic fracturing over time."

Anyone who has had a "preemie" arrive in their family knows how vulnerable these little ones are. So another area of concern for us is studies such as the one by the University of Pittsburg (page 72) which linked low birth weight in three heavily drilled Pennsylvania counties to the number of wells in the proximity. Those closer to wells were 34% more likely to weigh significantly less than expected for the number of weeks of pregnancy. A different study by Johns Hopkins has found pregnant women living near heavy fracking in Pennsylvania have a 40% higher risk of giving birth to a premature baby. There are similar concerns about proximity of schools and day care centers to drilling activity and the effects on the developmental impacts on the children in those places.

We don't live near the wells, but the gas that will be involved in the RGUI will come from them. We do not believe that business decisions can be made in isolation from recognized impacts on the people of our state. We can be reached at the email above if you would like to contact us or to set up a conversation.

Respectfully,

Carol Parowski, President

Shirley Rowe

Mark Heuer, PhD

Peg Lauver

Lana Gulden

Rev. Mary Peterhaensel

The Board of the Rivertown Coalition for Clean Air and Clean Water