



RIVERTOWNCOALITION
FOR CLEAN AIR AND CLEAN WATER

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

One of our larger concerns with the RGUI is the proposed virtual pipeline. A less discussed aspect of the gas industry is the presence of Radon in the Pennsylvania gas supply. We are aware that Radon testing kits have had standard availability to homeowners in Pennsylvania for years. The danger of Radon is well known for being the second largest cause of lung cancer¹. Radon is a naturally radioactive gas whose half-life is four days. Depending on the concentration of the Radon in the rock and how long it takes the gas to go from the well, to production site, to the user, levels of Radon in the gas could be significant. It is the long-term exposure to Radon that creates the most problems. So if I encounter a burst of Radon in one day, it is less harmful than prolonged low-level exposure.

We are concerned that this shorter distance “virtual pipeline” will have the additional danger of prolonged Radon exposure to Pennsylvanians that will not be detected until after cancers form from such exposure and it is too late. When asked about Radon and this project, Mr. Kiel said he was aware of Radon and its properties, but did not identify any remediation efforts to be pursued in the “virtual pipeline” plan. It would seem that prolonged exposure to Radon likely will be an “unintended consequence” of the virtual pipeline.

Methane is the other gas whose adverse effects we are concerned about. According to OSHA, the health impacts of this gas on humans are more immediate and are caused by Methane’s displacing Oxygen rather than by long-term exposure. In the event of a Methane leak, the Methane replaces the Oxygen in the air causing rapid breathing, increased heart rate, vomiting and in some cases, death. Methane is also extremely flammable and explosive. Even static electricity can spark an explosion of Methane in an enclosed space. We have all heard of pipeline explosions. There were 10,844 in the years 1995-2014 with 371 fatalities and 1,395 injuries.² The average incident count in the last three years cited in this report is actually higher (632), than the 20 year average (542) for such incidents. While the Parker Ranch methane leak in California is an extreme event that has been compared to the BP oil spill in terms of environmental devastation,³ this California incident has directly impacted over two thousand people who have needed to leave their homes until this leak can be contained.

Methane gas is present in nature in all decomposing organic matter, as well as in the process of digestion. We also have concerns with mitigating the natural sources of Methane because of the impact it has on the planet as a greenhouse gas. While it ‘only’ represents 10% of greenhouse gas emissions Methane is 21 times more powerful than CO² in absorbing and keeping heat in the atmosphere. It persists for about 25 years, which is much shorter than the CO² impact of 100-year persistence, but has strong consequences. By knowingly releasing Methane as part of the gas extraction and transporting processes, it seems to us that we are working against ourselves by significantly multiplying the effects of naturally occurring Methane. The attached newsletter describes some ways local farmers are mitigating the effects of naturally created methane to generate power for their farms. Sadly, a number of these creative solutions are under attack by Public Utilities that want to halt net metering.

The dangers identified above are real and many dangers also result from the aging infrastructure.⁴ Granted, yours is a new installation, but it will become a ticking time bomb for our descendants, in the same manner as the predictable decay of casings at gas well sites. We mention ‘casing decay at well sites’ because on the last slide titled *Conclusions* of a presentation by the Society of Petroleum Engineers is this statement: **“There is a large industry problem related to the integrity of the cement sheath providing long term isolation.”**⁵ This says to us that some day the cement casings used in fracking will leak. As for us and the members of our Coalition, we don’t think pursuing more gas fracking and the pipelines needed to transport it is worth the inherent danger to our children and grandchildren when there are safer renewables available.

We invite you to attend our spring event on renewable energy. It is called “*New Day Dawning*” and will be held on April 23rd in Selingsgrove. Details are on the front of the newsletter. We hope to see you there.

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

¹<http://www.cancer.org/cancer/cancercauses/othercarcinogens/pollution/radon>

²https://hip.phmsa.dot.gov/analyticsSOAP/saw.dll?Portalpages&NQUser=PDM_WEB_USER&NQPassword=Public_Web_User1&PortalPath=%2Fshared%2FPDM%20Public%20Website%2F_portal%2FSC%20Incident%20Trend&Page=All%20Reported&Action=Navigate&col1=%22PHP%20-%20Geo%20Location%22.%22State%20Name%22&val1=%22%22

³<http://www.cnn.com/2016/01/07/us/california-porter-ranch-gas-leak-emergency/>

⁴<http://www.technologyreview.com/news/545571/california-gas-leak-exposes-growing-natural-gas-risks/>

⁵<http://www.spe.org/dl/docs/2007/Kellingray.pdf>