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From: Ducatman, Alan

To: Donald C. Strimbeck (dcsoinks@comcast.net)

Sent: Tuesday, December 24, 2013 12:04 PM

Subject: Revised, intended for use if you want to do so

Hello Donald Strimbeck:

On December 17, your very useful daily news feed posted a public communication of the shale gas industry, a response to (another) example of contamination from surface spills. The essence of one of the industry points was that the evidence of spills causing problems isn't really news or all, or even important, because, after all, one expects a certain amount of spills and some contamination is to be expected.

I hope this becomes a consistent and more reasonable position of the industry. In the past, and, unfortunately, continuing in many present forums, those who speak for the industry have and continue to advocate that it can't do harm, because the gas is many thousands of feet below the surface, and there is no communication between the deep gas and the surface. (I won't comment on the industry's assumption about that, it too may deserve study, but it is not the point of my note). I am writing because the honest (if dismissive) admission that "surface spills happen" is still a vast improvement over other public communications. It can be criticized only for startling lack of consistency with past and present behavior in public forums. Too often, those who represent the industry still say the opposite.

The industry, like any industry, is not monolithic. But the effects of unscientific communications and public affairs that ignore data do have a terrible and monolithic weight, increasing the already substantial burden of externalized costs, quality of life changes, and health risks (yes, health risks) to some who live nearby and stand to lose. (And, in fairness, the industry provides economic and social rewards to others who share in the industry interests and also so many of us in our country who use the product).

Now that there has been an acknowledgement that - of course spills happen, I hope for further improvements that could improve the industries reputation with neighbors. I look forward to future acknowledgements of quality assurance and public protection needs, and better reporting. Here are some examples:

- Yes, casings can fail. They are built by humans, and even those built well may not last forever.
- No, not all the gas comes up through the pipe.
- Yes, we really do need to get a quality assurance handle on distribution pipelines, (and maybe the acute need is gathering lines?).
- No, the current status of pre/post testing is still not up to par in many places. We agree that a full round of pre-post water testing (without hidden data and with more than just one test) is an industry responsibility, also that the cost should not be shifted to homeowners, that the work should be done independently by experts who do not rely directly on the industry for their livelihood, and that drilling in the absence of this information is irresponsible and even fraught with health risk (for all of us) and eventual legal risk (for the industry).
- No, current noise, dust, and local air pollution levels are not always ok, and we are working on better measures and also improvements.
- Yes, the industry should do a better job with social offsets to communities, including the costs of medically uninsured subcontract workers, more consideration of water sources and disposals, better traffic management, and the implications of man camps on local sanitation.
- Expanding one topic above, my personal favorite, but not a news story many are covering - Yes, we need to do a better job on worker safety, and offsetting the costs to sub-sub-contractors is not the answer we want to be known for.

These are informal observations, and not intended to be a complete list. I am encouraged by the industry observation that spills do occur because it is an improvement. That this acknowledgement of a long-standing reality also represents an improvement also describes the baseline. Even today there are stories that water pollution is de minimis, which is not realistic to those affected at the local level. There is a long way to go in how the public affairs and how the scientific data are packaged for public consumption. Improvements and efforts to be accurate and not overstated should be a goal (for all, not just the industry).

Today's headline implies that Maryland missed the boat because it decided on careful study for its small share of this resource. Why was the article written from that perspective? It lacks perspective on the nature of the gas. It is stored for free, and has been that way for much longer than any of us can recall. Barring discovery of some new energy source, today's low prices will be a fond memory for our children. The gas is not going to become less valuable if we as a nation, and the industry with an eye on its future do a better, safer job extracting it. And, the future of the industry will not be harmed by efforts to improve sometimes radical public affairs, even if they "work" in the short term. I hope we are seeing the beginning of better acknowledgement of the mixture of problems and benefits, and more honest discussion of what the data show.

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