



**Statement of Dusty Horwitt, Partnership for Policy Integrity**  
**Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Listening Session on the Clean Power Plan**  
**Johnstown, Pa.**  
**September 22, 2015**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. My name is Dusty Horwitt. I represent the Partnership for Policy Integrity, a nonprofit that advocates for clean energy and provides science and legal advocacy to reduce reliance on polluting energy technologies that masquerade as “clean.”

Today, I will address the health risks to localities of relying on natural gas and bioenergy as compliance measures under the Clean Power Plan.

The Plan assumes states will reduce emissions at least in part by replacing coal with natural gas. As we have previously testified, increasing reliance on natural gas is a flawed climate solution due to infrastructure gas leakage and EPA’s undercounting of methane’s climate forcing potential.

Increased reliance on natural gas will also harm communities, because it will require increased drilling and hydraulic fracturing, accompanied by expanded infrastructure, including pipelines and compressor stations. These activities and infrastructure are inherently risky, as drilling companies disclose to their investors when they are required to do so by the federal Securities and Exchange Commission.<sup>1</sup>

The risks are not just hypothetical. The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reported last year that Pennsylvania DEP records showed 243 private water supplies in more than 20 counties had been contaminated, ran dry or suffered reduced flow as a result of drilling activity over the past seven years.<sup>2</sup> Most of the water supplies – 234 – were polluted by the oil and gas activities. Last year, public health professionals at the Southwest Pennsylvania Environmental Health Project found significant recurring spikes in the amount of particulate matter inside homes near drilling and fracking operations.<sup>3</sup> A peer-reviewed study published last year in Environmental Health Perspectives of 492 people in Washington County found that those who lived near

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Range Resources, Corp., Annual Report (Form 10-K) (Feb. 24, 2015) at

22; [http://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/315852/000156459015000899/rrc-10k\\_20141231.htm](http://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/315852/000156459015000899/rrc-10k_20141231.htm).

<sup>2</sup> <http://powersource.post-gazette.com/powersource/policy-powersource/2014/09/09/DEP-releases-details-on-water-contamination/stories/201409090010> and

[http://files.dep.state.pa.us/OilGas/BOGM/BOGMPortalFiles/OilGasReports/Determination\\_Letters/Regional\\_Determination\\_Letters.pdf](http://files.dep.state.pa.us/OilGas/BOGM/BOGMPortalFiles/OilGasReports/Determination_Letters/Regional_Determination_Letters.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jeffmcmahon/2014/06/26/air-pollution-spikes-in-homes-near-fracking-wells/>

natural gas wells had a higher incidence of skin conditions and upper respiratory problems than those living farther away from the gas wells.<sup>4</sup>

Compressor stations that help push natural gas through pipelines have been linked to especially high levels of air pollution. A 2009 study conducted for the Environmental Defense Fund<sup>5</sup> estimated that emissions of smog-forming compounds from natural gas compressor engines in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area would be 65 tons per day in that year—the equivalent of roughly a third of all oil and gas emissions in the area and three times the smog-forming emissions from the area’s airports.

Here in coal country, we don’t doubt that the biomass energy and waste incineration industries are promoting converting coal plants to burn waste wood as a means of complying with the Clean Power Plan. DEP must not go down this road. Not only does burning biomass emit more CO<sub>2</sub> per megawatt-hour than coal, these plants end up emitting as much or more carbon *monoxide*, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter, and heavy metals as they did when they were burning coal. Installing updated pollution controls could reduce these emissions, but controls are costly and companies avoid it when they can. For instance, we recently reviewed a coal-to-biomass conversion in L’Anse, Michigan.<sup>6</sup> The plant burns shredded tires and waste wood, including construction and demolition debris and creosote- and pesticide-treated railroad ties. People in that town get up every day and wipe soot off their cars, and we spoke to a daycare worker who told us that in winter, kids playing outside come in with greasy black stains on their snowsuits from all the soot on the snow. That toxic soot is going in peoples’ lungs, as well.

Cambria County isn’t meeting EPA’s health standard for ozone, an ingredient of smog, and many counties in Pennsylvania fail to meet health standards for both particulate matter and ozone. To keep the Clean Power Plan clean and to protect local communities, Pennsylvania must ramp up energy efficiency and true zero-emissions renewable energy. Pennsylvania has a genuine opportunity to improve air quality under the Clean Power Plan, but this will only happen if the technologies deployed are actually clean.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/1307732/>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.edf.org/sites/default/files/9235\\_Barnett\\_Shale\\_Report.pdf](http://www.edf.org/sites/default/files/9235_Barnett_Shale_Report.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.pfpi.net/groups-say-u-p-biomass-power-plant-blankets-community-in-toxic-soot>