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Beaver County Residents Express Concern as Shell Plastics Plant Begins Operations

Monaca, Pa., – Beaver County residents have been preparing for this moment when Shell Plastic Plants begins full operation. Now that that moment has arrived, residents say they are seriously concerned but ready.

Shell Chemical Appalachia LLC, a subsidiary of Shell, announced it has commenced operations of its Pennsylvania Chemical project, Shell Polymers Monaca (SPM). The Pennsylvania facility is the first major plastics manufacturing complex in the Northeastern United States and has a designed output of 1.6 million tons of plastics annually.

Beaver County Marcellus Awareness Community (BCMAC) has been actively working for the past several years to surround the Shell plant with air monitors that are currently recording levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and fine particulates. In addition, they established the Eyes On Shell Watchdog Team, comprised of dozens of residents, who are keeping logs of smells, flaring, smoke and discharges into the Ohio River around the clock.

Last week the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced an award of four grants totaling \$1.79 million to groups in southwest Pennsylvania to enhance ambient air quality monitoring in communities that are underserved, historically marginalized and overburdened by pollution. A total of \$499,781 that will boost that work with more high quality air monitors.

"This is a day we've been preparing for all along, said Nora Johnson, of BCMAC. "BCMAC has steadfastly opposed the plastic plant from the beginning and there is growing awareness that the region can expect more and worse health impacts from the plant's operations."

In addition, BCMAC/ Eyes on Shell and allies will hold a meeting next week to present Shell with a to-do list to meet community expectations on transparency and accountability. The groups will continue to work to hold Shell accountable and will be having a webinar with the community and national allies about the next steps to hold Shell accountable on Monday, Nov 21, at 7 p.m. The to-do list can be [found here](#).

BCMAC members plan to raise several concerns today at the public meeting of Beaver County Emergency Management. "We have been trying to learn about the impact this will have on first responders and emergency response plans," said Bob Schmetzer of BCMAC. "Shell no longer has a 24-hour hotline or answering service. People who see emergencies should dial 911 immediately."

"We've already had issues with air quality and have yet to learn what will be coming from the plant during a full run," added Schmetzer. "We have plenty of air inversions in our area - will they reduce operations during this period? These are serious concerns."

It's a sad day for health, safety, property values and quality of life in Beaver County," said Terrie Baumgartner of BCMAC. "What's it like to live in the Beaver County sacrifice zone at this moment? Imagine being Ubered at breakneck speed toward the cliff on the horizon by a driver who looks only in the rearview mirror while pressing the pedal to the floor."

"Now that the construction jobs have gone away, residents will begin paying for this plant with their health," said Matt Mehalik, Breathe Project executive director. The Breathe Project had been working with BCMAC members for the past six years to stop the plant from being built. Campaigns now address raising awareness of potential pollution that will come from the petrochemical industry.

The Pennsylvania Dept. of Environment Protection in 2021 updated the Shell Air Permit allowing the plant to emit not more than 516 millions tons of VOCs, 2.3 million tons of CO2 and 164 million tons of PM 2.5 in a 12-month period. In addition to the Shell plant, there are 8 Title V industries operating in close proximity including the BASF Monaca and Nova Chemical in Potter Township.

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