

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Trial on Fracking Well Located Near Thousands of Residents in Westmoreland County to start January 15, 2025**

**WESTMORELAND COUNTY, PA** - The Environmental Hearing Board (EHB), the adjudicative body that hears appeals from permits granted by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP), will begin hearings on January 15, 2025 on the PA DEP's issuance of drilling and operating permits for fracking wells by Apex Energy (PA), LLC at the Drakulic Well Pad. The PA DEP, so far, has granted Apex permits for 2 individual well bores, but early plans show up to 20 wells could be permitted on this size pad. CNX recently purchased Alex Energy and has promised Governor Josh Shapiro "Radical Transparency" on its projects but local [environmental advocates](#) are sceptical because of CNX's long history of environmental violations.

The Drakulic well pad is located in Penn Township, on the border of Trafford Borough, Westmoreland County. It is situated in the middle of sprawling suburban housing developments where about 3,500 people reside. The site is located about 1000 feet from the closest residence, about 800 feet from PA State Route 130, and a mile from the Westmoreland Heritage Trail. It is also within a mile of an elementary school and a half mile of at least one children's playground.

“When we moved to this wonderful neighborhood 11 years ago, we thought we found the best neighborhood to raise our young children, but didn’t expect less than a year later we would be dealing with the threat of a heavy industrial operation near our home that could put our family’s health at risk,” said Gillian Graber, Executive Director of Protect PT, an organization that works to protect local residents from the harms of shale gas development. “I didn’t set out to form an organization or fight for ten years for our community. I just wanted to keep my kids safe,” said Graber, referencing the origins of Protect PT, which started with this very Drakulic Well Pad near her home.

With studies coming out every year on how fracking can harm human health from exposure to mixed hazardous and radioactive emissions, causing an increase in negative health outcomes including childhood leukemia, Ms. Graber and other neighbors are worried about the future of their neighborhood and their children's health. [A study by the University of Pittsburgh](#) shows a nearly doubling incidence of Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia to those living within 2 miles of fracking operations. According to census data, there are 13,591 residents living within two miles of the Drakulic site, many of whom are families with young children who are particularly at risk. A study performed by [Harvard University](#) showed that radioactive materials are present in the air in significant amounts up to 10 miles from fracking operations.

“If there is a large fire at the Drakulic site and all those nearby trees that surround homes catch on fire, how are all of us going to be safely evacuated especially if Route 130 becomes impassable?” asks Larry Irr, a resident who lives about 2,000 feet from the site. “We have seen it happen before,” said Irr, pointing to a large well fire in Belmont County Ohio in 2018 where about 100 people living within 1 mile were evacuated by door to door notification. “At the Drakulic well site we are talking about thousands, not hundreds, many families with young kids,” said Irr.

Recently, supervisors in Cecil Township, a rural community in Washington County, instituted a 2,500 foot setback from protected structures and 5,000 foot setback for schools and hospitals after residents were impacted by fracking development. Residents of Penn Township are not so lucky, even after over 200 residents of Penn Township signed a petition drafted by Protect PT advocates requesting local commissioners increase setbacks.

Also, in October of this year, advocates from around the state submitted a rulemaking petition requesting the state Environmental Quality Board (EQB) institute similar protections to what Cecil Township has enacted. That hearing in front of the EQB will happen in February 2025 in Harrisburg.

The matter will go before the EHB because Protect PT appealed the grant of the permits by the DEP. Protect PT identifies numerous problems with the location of this well pad and its close proximity to homes, residents and children.

In addition to the harmful emissions that will be generated by these wells, Protect PT contends that Apex has not developed a satisfactory Emergency Management Plan that would provide for the evacuation of the residents in the event of an accident. In such close proximity to so many homes, Protect PT feels it would be impossible to develop a satisfactory evacuation plan because the main road that offers ingress and egress is PA. Route 130, a two-lane road. The people who live there vary in age from extremely young children to elderly and disabled adults.

The EHB hearing regarding the Drakulic well is scheduled to begin January 15th, 2025 at Piatt Place Downtown, 301 Fifth Ave #100, Pittsburgh, PA 15222 on the second floor, beginning at 10am, and will continue through January 17th, January 21st through 24th commencing at 9:30 am daily and then again on the 27th through the 31st.

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**Protect Penn-Trafford** is a citizen's group working to ensure the safety, security, and quality of life from the effects of unconventional gas development in Penn-Trafford and surrounding communities in Westmoreland and Allegheny Counties. Learn more at [protectpt.org](http://protectpt.org).