



Board of Supervisors
Jeffrey R. Dexter, Chairman

I am Jeff Dexter, the Chair of the Damascus Township Board of Supervisors. I wish to thank the DRBC for coming to us to hear our opinions on actions you may take to prescribe rules and procedures for Natural Gas Drilling in our area - along the upper Delaware River. Following me are those who will speak to the technical issues. I will use my time to introduce you to the people of this area. We are a hard working people and this is a hard working land.

Almost from the year of the arrival of the first colonist, we have developed the natural resources and they have contributed to the development of our nation. In 1763 we sent the first raft of white pine logs to the shipyards in Philadelphia, where they would be used to build ships great and small that carried commercial cargos throughout the world. The main mast of the USS Constitution was harvested only a few miles from where we are gathered. The timber industry will also furnish lumber for countless buildings, products required for the tanning industries, timbers for the coalmines that will fuel the first industrial revolution, ties for railroads that will bind the nation together (by the way: the running of the first commercial steam locomotive was here in Honesdale).

The sidewalks of NYC were built from stone from our quarries.

Had you come here just 50 years ago, you would have seen the countryside dotted with hundreds of family dairy farms. Fresh milk and eggs could be in the urban markets within 24 hours after it left the farm. There was an era when city families came to these farms to escape the heat and hardships of turn of the century urban life. Today they are almost all gone, the farms, the families, a way of life, the jobs.

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A one time there were mills, great and small. We produced world renowned cut glass, steel fabrication mills, cloth mills, wood fabrication mills. They are all gone now, and with them thousands of jobs that have not been replaced.

Today, our best product is our children. They leave and most do not return due to better economics elsewhere. They have left in such numbers, that the school enrollments are shrinking. Go out on an emergency call with one of the volunteer fire departments, you'll notice that the average age is probably 60. Younger fire fighters often work so far from home they are not available for many of the calls especially during day light hours.

You are the Delaware River Basin Commission, charged to regulate river flows. Within these proposals it seems like you want to enter the realm of land use regulation. We still harvest timber here, yet the amount of forest cover is increasing. Why do we need more rules, when we are doing pretty good on this now? The water quality produced on lands is improving; we're doing that well too. Why do we need more rules and more agencies to tell us what and how, when we are increasing the amount of exceptional waters now?

Let us not forget, that as a nation we cannot continue to send our financial resources overseas for energy; and our children to defend the supply lines. We all drove here today, this building is warm and lighted. The energy that produced this situation is gone, and must be economically replaced. While Natural gas is not the final energy solution, it here now, and it is less expensive, it is cleaner... and we need that. We can not handcuff our children's future with unstable energy prices, as we are now. Our nation needs this resource, we the residents need this process done right. Not hobbled by regulations that duplicate what the State regulates. We need this process done correctly, we need an economic future for our children here in this community, if this is where they wish to live; We need an economic future in which our children can prosper, and build homes, and make a good life .