

PA Environment Digest

An Update On Environmental Issues In PA

Edited By: David E. Hess, Crisci Associates

Winner 2009 [PAEE Business Partner](#) Of The Year Award

Harrisburg, Pa

July 9, 2012

Click On Link Below To Print Entire Digest

<http://goo.gl/MTCQd>

Opinion: Turning US versus THEM, into WE, As Leaders In Sustainability

By Gov. Tom Ridge

On June 28 the [Pennsylvania Environmental Council](#) honored former Gov. Tom Ridge with its Lifetime Achievement Award. Here is the text of Gov. Ridge's remarks from that event--

Thank you, Paul [King] and Jim [Mesloh]. Thank you Jim Seif and John Oliver.

My thanks to all of you – so many distinguished guests and friends.

-- Friends of TREC, of course Elsie, Sally Wiggins, members of my former administration, current DEP and DCNR folks.

-- And the Lake Erie Region Conservancy is nice for the "home town kid."

Being here with so many former colleagues, with John Oliver, and tonight's awardees, is an enormous honor.

In particular, it brings to mind one of my favorite quotes, by Woodrow Wilson – who said “I not only use all the brains that I have, but all that I can borrow.”

As Wilson knew quite well – you surround yourself with good people; you work together; you achieve more.

My public service career is one bolstered by many extraordinary people who served alongside me in many a collective mission to get things done.

And that's particularly the case when it comes to the work we ALL did to preserve the beauty, the bounty and the potential that is, was and has always been Pennsylvania.

For that reason, I accept this award on their behalf – of behalf of my former colleagues and our partners – who collectively succeeded in bringing our economic needs and environmental protection into a peaceful and protected co-existence.

The Award Citation, and John and Jim's remarks, describe some of what we tried to do in Harrisburg, from 1995 until the tragedy of 9/11 took me on quite a different trajectory.

We wanted to turn Pennsylvania's environmental effort from a purely regulatory one, into a full-fledged set of environmental programs, relevant to all Pennsylvanians.

We wanted to go from being the “environment police” – to being a partner with every Pennsylvanian who understood, or was willing to be educated about, why the environment matters so much, and in so many ways, wanted to help us to improve it.

We wanted to turn "Us" versus "Them," into WE, as leaders in sustainability.

We wanted to go from being just a nag, to being a catalyst, as the Pennsylvania Environmental Council has been for four decades.....finding new ways to promote the old values of William Penn, Gifford Pinchot, Rachel Carson, Maurice Goddard and millions of our fellow Pennsylvanians.

I believe that history will show that our initiatives were thoughtful responses to the challenges of those times.

Some of those efforts have shown long life, and some have faltered, for one reason or another.

We are proud of them all, but not so proud that we have to dwell upon them. Instead, let's think about the new challenges to which we must respond.

We start with the obvious.

Energy has come again to Pennsylvania.

Energy, in every meaning of the word, and because of it, a Pittsburgh that could already be proud of its latest successful revitalization, is a more vibrant and optimistic place than it's ever been.

This community truly knows how to Seize the Moment.

It was done starting with "smoke control" and the Gateway Center development in the late 1940s by the Heinz's, Mellons and the Hillmans as well as the visionary -- and I would add, bipartisan – political leadership of that time.

It continued through Dick Caliguiri, and starts anew now with Marcellus, and Utica, and crackers, and many other kinds of economic bounty.

But to seize this moment – We need to do all of this right. And vigorously.

We are indeed being vigorous. The activity is fast and furious, and is spinning off good jobs, steady royalty payments and revitalized basic industries.

I have no doubt that the free enterprise system will continue to innovate and continue to find and create wealth here and for the nation, just as it did in past centuries.

Indeed hydro-fracturing is a perfect example of an innovation that turned tight shale into the promising resource that it has become.

Doing this right may be trickier. But the Pennsylvania Environmental Council has helped lead us on sustainable path in the gas field.

Some groups fear the development of the shale gas fields, or at least find a thrill in causing others to fear it.

Some foreign nations, like France and Vermont, have even banned it. New Jersey recently legislated that frack waste can't go there. I wonder if they remember what the US Supreme Court said about our Constitution's Commerce Clause when Pennsylvania tried to ban New Jersey trash a few decades ago.

PEC and most Pennsylvanians, and the Governor and General Assembly, however, have gotten it right.

Act 13 adds new regulation for the new drilling practices. It strengthens an already admirable regulatory history going back decades.

We Pennsylvanians knew the wealth that coal and oil and gas brings, but knew that "dig and dump" and "drill and spill" practices of past centuries were no way to seize the moment for

this generation.

I urge strong and vigilant enforcement of these new provisions, and I know that the vast majority of companies and workers in the Marcellus field agree with me.

After all, we did not retire the environment police, we just made them one of our many partners and advisers.

If Pennsylvania does it right with gas, and a with sensible national energy policy, we will have a better and cleaner community, a more prosperous one, and the same will be true for the whole nation.

Every president in my adult life has promised Energy Independence.

Each was acutely aware of the distortions of our foreign policy, the stains in our fiscal system and the military vulnerability brought about by Energy Dependence.

But it is taking the ingenuity of hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling, and America's competitive free enterprise system, to make good on those Presidential promises.

The threat of terrorism has been another issue with which this state and this country has wrestled – but the that threat and the issue of energy independence are closely related.

We all know that frisking Grandma at the airport won't suffice to stop terrorism. What will do the job in the is a strong foreign policy, backed by a vibrant economy, and an energy policy that we can make by ourselves, and for ourselves.

And Southwest Pennsylvania and gas fields around the world will make that possible.

We will be stronger and safer when we don't have to fear for our energy supply and economic strength whenever we take strong steps against a rogue regime who tries to hold us hostage for oil.

We can gain further strength by the export of our energy.

To send energy abroad is to reverse the troubling foreign trade deficits of past decades, caused mostly by energy imports.

Let's redress that balance. Other nations need this energy, for just the same purposes we do, and we can and should use it to make friends and allies.

The Cove Point facility in Maryland, owned by our friends at Dominion, is close by the Marcellus field. Let's finish the job of turning the valves to run outbound, and earn some trade credits.

While we're at it, let's create a system for the use of gas in our vehicles -- like Giant Eagle is doing -- and let's find even more uses for natural gas by-products.

And let's be sure that a state with gas and an award-winning Brownfields program puts every gas facility it can on a brownfield.

Let's turn the well pads and "rights of way" back into the fields and forests and wetlands they were -- even improving those natural assets.

Let's use our water wisely, including water we thought we'd never retrieve, the acid mine water.

And let's include everyone in this mission – because it serves the greater mission, here in the beauty of Pennsylvania – and throughout our great country.

For we aren't just any country.

And we aren't just any state – we're a Commonwealth – what a Commonwealth.

We are the land of new beginnings – the land where liberty was born.

We are a wonderful, eclectic mix of Keystone pride, and national pride... of economic leadership, with a history inventiveness...and even unity.

You may wonder about unity – as we walk through another presidential election.

And yet, whether you wear a red hat or a blue hat – we all wear the badge of citizenship. That doesn't mean we must always agree. Unity doesn't require unanimity.

Often, it's the infusion of opposing ideas that makes us think a little more broadly – more creatively – to be open to different approaches – and still reach common ground and like-minded goals.

We've proven to be too optimistic to be limited thinkers.

Those of you here tonight are contributing in tremendous ways to the advancement of our energy resources, the protection of our environment and the revival of our economy. I thank you for that service.

Teddy Roosevelt once said, "Far and away, the prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing."

A country, a Commonwealth and communities that we can give to our children that are safe and clean and green and prosperous – that is hard work worth doing.

I appreciate your hard work in this important endeavor. And I very much appreciate the opportunity to have worked alongside you in that effort – as your congressman, your governor and your friend.

Thank you for a very special tribute and evening.

A [list of environmental accomplishments](#) by the Ridge and Schweiker Administrations compiled by PA Environment Digest is available online.