

## Letter to the Editor - What's in the air at Cove Point?

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### To the Editor:

Good news for people living in the air shed of Dominion Cove Point LNG! The county and Dominion aren't guarding our air quality, but a group of university researchers is stepping up for us. Headed by Dr. Michael McCawley of West Virginia University School of Public Health, this consortium is studying air pollution associated with fracking for natural gas and the health effects on people living near drilling and related infrastructure. The researchers are studying air quality at a gas drilling site in West Virginia, a compressor station in Myersville, MD, and now in Lusby at the proposed fracked-gas refinery and export site.

The consortium consists of researchers from University of Maryland, New York University, Rutgers, Columbia, University of Pennsylvania, Pitt and Wheeling Jesuit University. Dr. McCawley is also on the commission that is studying the long-term health problems of the 9/11 first responders in New York City.

Dr. McCawley was in Lusby the week of July 13, taking preliminary air samples to create a baseline of the air quality before Dominion plans to start in 2017. The first part of the study is funded through WVU; Dr. McCawley will apply to National Institutes of Health for the next phase. The entire study will last three to five years.

The ugly side of the massive Dominion expansion is being revealed. People are starting to understand that this isn't about the county fixing its budget problem with Dominion tax dollars. It's about the health of our residents. We are grateful that this consortium is interested in tracking this information—especially because the county is not monitoring air emissions, and Dominion claims to self-monitor but “forgets” to inform the public. Dominion has already shown how it self-monitors. Twenty-seven ammonia releases were announced more than two years after they occurred.

Dominion is an untrustworthy neighbor.

Calvert Citizens for a Healthy Community (CCHC) thanks county commissioners Hart and Weems for accepting our invitation to hear Dr. McCawley speak at our July 15 meeting. Commissioner Hart asked many valuable questions and stayed until the end to get all of the information. We also appreciate that Commissioner Hart agreed to have one of the air monitors at his house.

At the CCHC meeting, I asked Dr. McCawley about the worst and best case for anticipated health problems. He is most concerned about the potential for high levels of ultrafine particles (particles less than 0.1 micrometers in diameter), and benzene and formaldehyde, among other dangerous substances. These are linked to cancer, respiratory and cardiovascular issues. Alzheimer's, dementia, epilepsy and MS are also of concern, because ultrafine particles can cross the blood/brain barrier. He also wants to study birth statistics because these tiny particles can cross the placental barrier. Our most vulnerable are likely to suffer the most: children, elderly and anyone with existing health issues. He did not offer a best-case scenario.

We, the citizens of Calvert County, and Lusby in particular, are the canary in the coalmine. Some people who attended our meeting left early. I suspect that the alarming message that we could have cancer, lung, heart and brain diseases in our future—with no recourse and no control—was more than people could handle. One woman said she doesn't have five years to wait to find out if living here is going to cause her cancer.

Why is the county doing nothing to protect us? Noise, mud, traffic, and road closures are all significant problems already. Those are nothing compared with the long-term health effects we are facing.

Gandhi once said, “It is health that is real wealth, and not pieces of gold and silver.”

**Tracey Eno, Calvert Citizens for a Healthy Community**

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