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Recently, I attended the DEP Harrisburg Citizens Advisory Council meeting on Act 54. While I consider myself an environmentalist, I know very little about long-wall mining and the concerns it raises. However, one doesn't need to be a mining engineer to realize that after wide swaths of coal are removed underground, thereby allowing the mine ceiling of rock overburden to crack and collapse on the mine floor, that long-wall mining is a crazy practice. Long-wall mining promotes surface subsidence and with that the pooling or drowning of streams topside. This then creates mine drainage issues as the streams can now trickle through the cracks or collapsing rock overburden. I recall a landfill operator saying that the ground water around a landfill was only as safe as the landfill cover above it. I believe the rock overburden over a mine can be likened to a landfill cover.

Besides that, the subsidence gives an added exit for the coal-bed methane. With the mounting concerns about climate change, I feel full extraction mining needs to be prohibited in PA (and elsewhere). Room and pillar operations, while not as efficient for the coal mine operators, need to be, for the sake of the environment, DEP's only option for coal removal. Steve Kunz from the James Schmid Co. and Davitt Woodwell from PEC in commenting on the 4th five-year report on Act 54 made a convincing case, I thought, that the permitting and use of long-wall coal mining can and should not be separated from the serious land and stream degradations and methane gas emissions it creates.

Sincerely,

Andrew Saul



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