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Thomas J. Shepstone

March 10, 2022

Department of Environmental Protection
Southeast Region
Waterways and Wetlands Program
2 Main St.
Norristown, PA 19401

March 8, 2022

Re: Comments on ME2 Amendment Application, Chester County

Shepstone Management Company, Inc. is a planning and research firm and we consult with a wide variety of both public and private clients in matters of planning and economic development. I am the owner and principal of the firm, which also publishes the NaturalGasNOW.org blog. We advocate for natural gas development as a foundation for economic development and environmental improvement in our Commonwealth.

I write to urge the Department of Environmental Protection to give quick approval to the restoration work related to construction of Mariner East 2.

This restoration project will improve the environment in various ways. It will construct additional habitats, remove nuisance wildlife, and increase water depth. In addition, it will enhance water quality, increase reservoir storage capacity, remove accumulated sediment deposits, and provide long-term water quality monitoring.

Environmental concerns are not a valid reason to block this effort, considering this restoration plan, which goes way beyond what would typically be done following an inadvertent return, will leave the lake in better condition than its original state.

And, just as restoration is required at construction sites all along the pipeline route, all the work here is temporary, with all upland areas restored back to existing conditions, grades, and elevations once the work is completed.

Most importantly, there is no other energy source that can deliver the BTUs we need to power our modern economy and do so from such a small environmental footprint.

Let me also make one final point that seems to elude so many of the opponents of this project; that the bentonite inadvertently discharged to March Creek is as ordinary, harmless and natural as any product could be and constitutes zero threat to the environment. Consider the following,

for instance:

1. DEP itself lists bentonite as a preferred method to restore streams in its *Engineering Manual for Mining Operations*.
2. The Chester County Health Department regulations list bentonite grout as one of the required grout options when constructing residential wells in the same region as the pipeline.
3. Bentonite is used in the design and construction of lakes, ponds and reservoirs by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
4. When the Marsh Creek dam was constructed between 1970 and 1973, bentonite was used in the dam wall to prevent seepage, which is a common procedure.
5. Bentonite is routinely used at hazardous waste sites when capping them.
6. Bentonite is commonly used in drinking water well construction.
7. Bentonite is routinely used in irrigation ditches, in farm and recreational ponds, and in the construction and maintenance of water reservoirs for public water supplies.
8. Bentonite is a naturally occurring mineral substance, approved as safe by the U.S. FDA.
9. Bentonite is used as an ingredient in products such as hand soaps, sunscreen, lotions, face masks, cosmetic products and fabric softeners.
10. Bentonite is actually marketed as a food additive, for use as an anti-caking agent.
11. Bentonite is used to purify and clarify other food products such as fruit juices, wines and beers.
12. Bentonite is sold as a wholistic medicine to settle the stomach from gastrointestinal issues.

Any suggest bentonite has created a major problem with respect to Marsh Creek is nonsense.

I strongly encourage DEP to allow Marner East 2 to move forward with completion of the restoration work at Marsh Creek. I tried to participate in the hearing Tuesday evening and answered your call but you apparently couldn't hear me respond, so I thank you in advance for considering these written comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas J. Shepstone". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Thomas" and last name "Shepstone" clearly distinguishable.

THOMAS J. SHEPSTONE