

Betty Reibson
James C. Rogers
Norman J. Miller
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



Lynne A. Stabryla
CHIEF CLERK

Kenneth R. Levitzky
SOLICITOR

Commissioner's Office
Laporte, Pennsylvania 18626
717-946-5201 FAX 717-946-4421

June 18, 1998

Testimony

Norman J. Miller
Sullivan County Commissioner
Laporte, PA

RE: Environmental Resource and Energy Committee hearing on Non-Coal Mining Operations.

I am retired from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation after 31 years of service, 26 of those years as the Assistant District Soils Engineer. My education is in the Field of Geology, Mineralogy and Soil Science; however I don't have a degree in any of these fields.

As an Assistant District Soils Engineer, one of my major responsibilities was to investigate and document the geologic features that would have an effect on new roadway alignments. This investigation involved reviewing aerial photography of the proposed roadway area and to locate, study, and review all available geologic data. The most beneficial sources of information was the numerous small stone quarries, shale and gravel pits throughout the area. Over the past 50 years or so, one of these small operations have developed on just about every farm in this area, either the small flag stone quarry to supplement the land owner's income, or a shale pit which would be utilized to construct and maintain dirt roads. The majority of these operations are very small in nature and worked on a part-time basis; some have been dormant many years.

On many occasions while visiting these quarries, I encountered small groups of students and hobbyists also studying the various rock formations, collecting minerals and fossils. These small quarries contain a great source of information and educational opportunities for the local high schools and colleges as well as the various rock and mineral clubs.

Last fall I toured some of the Blue Stone Quarries in Susquehanna County along with Norm Clark, Charley Shaddock and several inspectors from the Bureau of Mines. In some of the inactive quarries we visited, the inspectors were concerned with the safety or hazards these inactive or dormant quarries posed to the general public.

If safety is a major concern of the regulators of the small quarries, these people should take a hike down the gorge at Ricketts Glenn State Park. There are 9 water falls in this gorge ranging anywhere between 25 to 100 feet in height. The hiking path that traverses the gorge for approximately 9 miles is very steep, narrow, wet, and unimproved. The local rescue team, of which I am a member, responds for an emergency fall victim approximately 10 times each year.

As a County Commissioner of Sullivan County, I am very concerned about the economic growth in our area. Over the past few years many of the small quarry operators have gone out of business or are scared to death, due to the unnecessary regulations contained in Act 219. I therefore strongly urge this committee to recommend passage of HB1975.

Respectfully submitted,


Norman J. Miller