

Driving a back road approaching E. Smithfield PA from the west, I see a gas pipe emerging from the bowels of a farmer's field. There are tanker trucks on the road in large numbers, and drilling apparatus blankets the countryside. The trucks haul fresh local water to the wells, and pick up toxic water recovered from fracking to take it to be processed or dumped. Fracking ponds, gas flares, truck depots, and men with out of state plates on their pickup trucks making it all work. I was on the way from Williamsport via Troy and Columbia Crossroads. The housing shortage is evident. Gas companies have bought motels and property for cheap temporary housing. Signs reading "RV Hookups Here" dot the road.

I've been driving through the area for many years. I love the bucolic farmland, dairy farms with tractors and spreaders and balers and such, and the infrequent equipment dealer. These are in the service of farmers and their corn and soybean fields, herds of cows and coups of chickens and stables of horses, and infrequent exotic animals such as llama and emu. Country homes are spread out with lots of elbow room, interspersed with woodland and wildlife.

It's all changing. The gas pipe is on a hillside next to the road, overlooking a farmhouse and barn. Across the road are backhoes and loaders and specialized heavy equipment rearranging the land to tame the gas. The pipe is pointed down the hill at the house and barn, ready to spew into tanker trucks I suppose. Images of pollution and sickness are fresh in my mind from the gas industry trail, and I fear the pipe and all it portends.