

# Ethanol environmental impact report made public

By Kevin Hensil

Conoy Township residents cleared one more hurdle in the conditional use proceedings last week when the township's board of supervisors released an environmental impact study regarding Penn Mar Ethanol's plans to build an \$80 million ethanol plant near the county incinerator.

Supervisors reversed a previous decision and agreed to a request, clearly supported by many in attendance, to release a preliminary report, conducted by ENSR International, on the plant's environmental impact on Conoy Township and the surrounding areas.

However, to the frustration of many residents, testimony in the three-hour hearing only included cross-examination of a Penn-Mar expert about primarily technical aspects of ethanol production where corn is turned into a fuel additive. Residents must wait for a later meeting to ask detailed questions about potential odor, pollution and traffic issues.

The township had requested the environmental report study of the potential pollution and odor from the plant. According to township officials, ENSR International, requested the preliminary version not be released because it contained many assumptions that would be clarified.

Joel Burcat, attorney for Nissley Vineyards, argued the preliminary version had been reviewed by Penn-Mar and covered in the media. The supervisors then voted unanimously to

"I hope it would be the best plant that could be built, but based on the testimony and the dancing around the answers my level of comfort has not gotten any better."

Richard King  
on ethanol hearings

make it public.

The evening was expected to include testimony from Penn-Mar experts about the handling of carbon dioxide, but the public's cross-examination of Richard Veazie consumed the entire meeting. Previously, he had detailed the multi-step ethanol production process.

The proposed dry corn milling plant along Route 441 would produce 55 million gallons of ethanol annually, he said.

"The size of this plant is typical to other plants under construction in the U.S. right now," Veazie said.

As proposed, the site, which would be located parallel to the Susquehanna River, would include several production buildings and storage tanks. A pair of 750,000-gallon tanks, nearly five stories tall, would store ethanol. Veazie said the plant would use per month an estimated 9,000 gallons of sodium hydroxide, 3,700 gallons of sulfuric acid and 10,300 gallons of ammonia.

Plus, 230,000 gallons of gasoline, which is added the ethanol before shipment to make it non-potable as required by the federal government. Veazie estimated the average gasoline tanker truck carries 7,000 gallons.

Burcat questioned Veazie about problems at an Illinois ethanol plant built by his company. Last year, the Illinois state attorney general filed eight charges against Adkins Energy including allegations the plant caused or allowed air pollution, was operating without a permit, failed to conduct required emissions tests, exceeded emissions limitations and other charges.

Veazie said Lurgi PSI of Tennessee designed and built, and is part owner of the plant, but the plant's operators are responsible for the problems. He blamed the environmental issues on a faulty grain dryer from a supplier. Veazie testified the dryer was shut down and has been replaced. He blamed most of the other charges on the operators for either failing to get the necessary permits or provide information to the state.

The hearing recessed as scheduled at 10 p.m. with the conclusion of Veazie's testimony. Penn-Mar attorney Reed Anderson said when the hearing resumed Nov. 3 at 7 p.m. the company would provide testimony about a traffic study and railroad usage.

Anderson said the hearing's progress is moving slower than expected, but he is satisfied.

"The process is going fine. People had some very good questions and Mr. Veazie answered them," Anderson added.

Richard King of Hellam Township in York County questioned Veazie at length about the impact to the Susquehanna River. He believes more emphasis should be placed on the regional impact of the plant.

"I hope it would be the best



DONEGAL LEDGER photo—Ryan Phillips

**Chris Robinson and Mike Collier, of Swedish Motors in Marietta, voiced their opposition to the proposed ethanol plant in Conoy Township last week. Robinson is a member of the Conewago Canoe Club, which spends a great deal of time at the Bainbridge section of the Susquehanna River. The protest signs made reference to township supervisors Steve Mohr, who, during the ongoing conditional use process, refused to remove himself from the hearings. Mohr owns property near the planned site, and is seen by opponents as having a conflict of interest in the case since Penn-Mar Ethanol would have to purchase a piece of his land for plant operations.**

plants that could be built, but based on the testimony and the dancing around the answers my level of comfort has not gotten any better," King said. "In fact, I have more questions and concerns now."

To the frustration of several residents, Veazie and Anderson have repeatedly said specific questions about environmental issues would be discussed at

length in upcoming weeks.

"I'm waiting to hear some answers to our questions," George Rhoads, Bainbridge, told Penn-Mar representatives.

"It seems like a wait and see game," said Ron Fry, who lives about two-miles from the site.

Paul and Louise Reichert said

after three meetings they're still opposed to the plant moving into Conoy.

"We don't see a benefit for the average person in this town. It is for-profit business with some serious issues in terms of health, pollution and traffic," they contested.