

January 27, 2010

Roxana Witter, MD, MS, MSPH
Department of Environmental and Occupational Health
Colorado School of Public Health
13001 E. 17th Place, Mail Stop B119
Aurora, CO 80045

Re: Health Impact Assessment of Gas Exploration in Garfield County, Colorado

Dear Dr. Witter:

As Dean of the Colorado School of Public Health, I would like to express my continued enthusiasm and support for your application to the Pew Charitable Trust to conduct a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) that will contribute to decision-making surrounding energy development activities in Colorado.

I was pleased to have had the personal opportunity to serve as a reviewer for the original white paper and literature review that you and your team conducted in 2008. This proved to be an important contribution by faculty of the Colorado School of Public Health to the public discourse on the subject of oil and gas exploration. It also helped establish an important role for our Department of Environmental and Occupational Health in promoting the sound use of exposure and health data in policy making. As you know, this is an important regional issue. In 2008, more than 8000 drillings leases were issued. Even during the recession, in 2009, more than 5000 more land use permits were issued. New oil and gas regulations have been recently put in place, which will affect how permits are issued. Community health must now be considered in the process, and thus our involvement is being welcomed.

This particular HIA will have special significance. It will help address the Comprehensive Drilling Plan (CDP), the Major Land Use Impact Review (MLUIR) permit applications and individual well permits for natural gas drilling in the community of Battlement Mesa, Colorado. This is a community that is often in the news because of its proximity to the current permits, the high level of community health concerns, and the interest of the County Commissioners in addressing community concerns. I think it will prove to be a seminal contribution to public health in this region because other counties and states already look to Garfield County as a thought leader in dealing with the delicate balance between oil and gas development, environment, and health. This CDP will be the first to be permitted in Colorado under the new Colorado Oil and Gas Regulations. The high level of interest and support for this HIA that has come from the Garfield County Health Department, the County Commissioners, Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment, the Colorado Oil and Gas Commission, environmentalists, and

community members speaks to both the importance of this effort and to your success in working with the many stakeholders.

This grant represents a great opportunity for you, and the rest of us at CSPH to learn more about the methods, conduct, and policy implications of HIAs, which will be very useful to our students and faculty. The fact that your proposal will include dissemination of what you have learned about HIAs to others through a seminar and distance learning is extremely valuable. This fits well with our School's mission to reach the vast region of the Western United States where there are few schools of public health (yet major environmental health concerns). I'm pleased that you will be able to broaden the educational reach through collaboration with two Centers within our School: the NIOSH Mountain and Plains Education and Research Center directed by your mentor and co-investigator Dr. Lee Newman, and the Center for Public Health Practice, led by Associate Dean Dr. Tim Byers. These Centers have the know-how and the technical tools needed to help you coordinate both a live educational conference as well as to provide an online "distance learning module" version of the HIA training.

I look forward to your success in obtaining this grant and to the results of the HIA. I would be happy to serve on the internal advisory panel that you are creating to review your approach, draft document, and dissemination plan. I'm happy to offer my support for your efforts, as well as any advice I can provide based on my experience in the conduct of public health practice and research in the rural communities of Colorado.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard F. Hamman", with a long, sweeping underline.

Richard F. Hamman, MD, DrPH
Professor and Dean