

# The Sentinel

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## editorial/opinion

### Ethanol factory spurs skepticism

By [The Sentinel](#), March 31, 2005

Ethanol!

Few around here apparently want it... in their towns, in their cars, in a plant, on a truck or a train.

Penn Mar Ethanol, a partnership of 13 farmers from south-central Pennsylvania and central Maryland proposed making ethanol, a fuel additive made from corn, in Lancaster but residents raised the roof.

Now, Penn Mar want to located in Greene and Letterkenny townships on Cumberland Valley Business Park land earmarked for heavy industry.

No one seems to know how Penn Mar got the idea that the plant might get a better reception in Franklin County, but it hasn't. And since the company needs a zoning waiver to building taller storage facilities than Greene Township allows, residents and environmentalists are lining up to fight.

E-mails daily fly into this office opposing it. And 200 citizens turned out Tuesday night for a supervisors' meeting to learn about the ethanol proposal, but only 100 could cram into the room. So, the other 100 crowded around an open window chanting, "We can't hear."

Thus, the meeting was postponed until April 28 when officials are supposed to come up with a facility to fit 200. But with all of the furor, they may have to prepare for 40 or face another protest.

But wait, there's more to come before that date. The zoning hearing board meets April 18 to hear the waiver request. Officials had better find those larger venue for that session first.

Is this to be taken lightly? No. People are upset. They fear they'll need gas masks to fend off the odors, explosions, fires, hazardous chemicals both on-site and in the trucks and trains coming and going from the proposed plant

This is definitely a catch-22. Ethanol is produced now in a reported 80 plants in the Midwest to use in vehicles after being blended with petroleum distillates. The idea is cut American reliance on high-priced oil. Using corn is a lot cheaper.

But heavy industry is hardly welcomed anywhere around here these days. So, what's happening in this rural township shouldn't be a surprise to anyone.

Even reports from a Franklin County task force that toured the Badger State Ethanol plant in Monroe, Wis. haven't helped. That group brought back a video showing the community living in harmony with an ethanol plant.

But that's a fluke, accord to opponent Fred Antoun, lawyer for Citizens for a Quality Environment, who said that Badger State is a "poster plant" but others in existence "catching fire and stinking. These folks just don't believe they're going to get a Ferrari here."

And since few of us ever do get a Ferrari, that statement is hard to refute.

So it stands to reason that people would be leery. They know from experience that promises of good neighbor plants often prove hollow.