

Grant Will Provide Drinking Water Testing

This column is presented weekly by the Public Education sub-committee of the Clinton County Natural Gas Task Force in an effort to provide accurate, up-to-date information on activities surrounding the Marcellus Shale formation and the natural gas exploration industry. For more information on Task Force activities, visit the Task Force page on the Clinton County government website at www.clintoncountypa.com.

One of the biggest concerns of people who live in areas where natural gas drilling is occurring is how drilling activities might impact their private drinking water supply. People who have wells or springs as their water source are advised to have their water tested by an independent third-party, so that water quality parameters are in place before any drilling occurs.

For some, the price of this baseline testing may be prohibitive. However, the Clinton County Conservation District recently announced that it is assisting with a grant program designed to help people who might not be able to afford water testing.

Clinton County will be part of eight counties offering this program of free testing of private drinking water supplies. The actual water testing is scheduled for next year during March and April. An educational workshop will serve as a follow-up to the testing. The workshop will be mandatory for all participants and will be conducted by Penn State Cooperative Extension personnel to explain the testing results.

Conservation District director Mary Ann Bower says that a target of about 100 water tests are expected to be conducted in Clinton County. She emphasizes that the goal of the testing is to check water supplies in areas where there is expected to be natural gas drilling. Those interested in being considered for the program are asked to complete and submit their application by March 1, 2012.

Following is the information regarding the grant program:

A \$150,000 allocation has been secured through the Colcom Foundation's grant program "Marcellus Environmental Fund" for the Headwaters Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Council's Quality Drinking Water Project. The purpose of the grant is to provide low income families in Clinton, Centre, Clearfield, Elk, Potter, Cameron, Jefferson and McKean Counties with funding to secure chain-of-custody water sample analyses of their private water supplies prior to Marcellus Shale gas well drilling activities. Additionally, mandatory educational workshops are being provided, and material explaining how to interpret the water quality results, when do things become toxic, and what the homeowner should do in case something does happen to their water supply.

RC&D is partnering with various organizations and agencies to conduct the water testings and workshops, including Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Penn State Cooperative Extension and local school districts and conservation districts.

The first set of water samplings will take place in Jefferson and Clearfield Counties. Testing will be conducted October 24 through December 2, 2011, with a mandatory educational workshop following. For Clearfield County, the workshop will be held on Wednesday, December 14 from 5-7 pm, location to be determined. For those living in Jefferson County, the workshop will be held on Thursday, December 15 from 5-7 pm, location to be determined.

The second set of water samplings will take place in Elk and Centre Counties. Testing will be conducted January 9 through February 17, 2012, with a mandatory educational workshop following. For Centre County, the workshop will be held on Wednesday, March 7, 2012, from 5-7 pm, location to be determined. For those living in Elk County, the workshop will be held on Thursday, March 8, 2012, from 5-7 pm, location to be determined.

The third set of water samplings will take place in Clinton and Cameron Counties. Testing will be conducted March 12 through April 20, 2012, with a mandatory educational workshop following. For Clinton County, the workshop will be held on Wednesday, May 9, 2012, from 5-7 pm, location to be determined. For those living in Cameron County, the workshop will be held on Thursday, May 10, 2012, from 5-7 pm, location to be determined.

The fourth set of water samplings will take place in McKean and Potter Counties. Testing will be conducted May 14 through June 22, 2012, with a mandatory educational workshop following. For folks living in McKean County, the workshop will be held on Wednesday, July 11, 2012, from 5-7 pm, location to

be determined. For Potter County, the workshop will be held on Thursday, July 12, 2012, from 5-7 pm, location to be determined.

For more information, contact the Clinton County Conservation District at 570-723-3798, or conserve@comcast.net, or project leader Kelly Williams, Clearfield County Conservation District's Watershed Conservationist at 814-765-2629 or kwilliamsccd@atlanticbbn.net. Applications are due by March 1, 2012 and can be obtained through either the Clinton County or Clearfield County Conservation District offices, online at www.headwaterspa.org, or through the Clinton County government web site at www.clintoncountypa.com.

The Headwaters Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Council is tasked with providing local leadership to improve the economic, environmental, and social well-being of the people of Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Jefferson, McKean, and Potter counties in north-central Pennsylvania. The Headwaters Resources Conservation and Development Council is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization and an equal opportunity employer.