

DEP web site a good source for natural gas information

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.

When talking about natural gas drilling and activities related to the Marcellus Shale in particular, many people have some basic questions, such as what companies are drilling in this area, how many wells are being drilled, and what are those wells producing. Answers to these and many other questions can be found through Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the oversight agency for Marcellus Shale drilling activities in the Commonwealth.

DEP's web site – www.dep.state.pa.us – contains a wealth of information, current and historical, regarding the state's involvement with natural gas activity in the Marcellus Shale. And while it may take some time to become familiar with how to search for information, people can definitely use the web site to better understand what's happening in their back yard and around the state.

From the DEP home page, there are two basic ways to access Marcellus Shale information. You can scroll down the left side column and click on the heading "Oil and Gas." You can also access gas well production information by pointing your browser arrow on the category located in one of the boxed topics in the center of the home page titled "Gas Production Reports."

Clicking on the "Oil and Gas" topic will get you to information on DEP's recently-established Office of Oil and Gas. According to the DEP, as a reflection of the state's recognition of the importance of proper oversight of the natural gas industry, the Bureau of Oil and Gas Management became the Office of Oil and Gas Management. The integration of both central staff and field staff under the same management structure was designed to allow the Department to better ensure that the oil and gas industry would be administered in a uniform manner. The reorganization was also designed to give DEP the ability to better coordinate its permitting, inspection and enforcement efforts, as well as enhance the Department's training and outreach programs.

The new Office of Oil and Gas Management is responsible for the statewide oil and gas conservation and environmental programs to facilitate the safe exploration, development, recovery of Pennsylvania's oil and gas reservoirs in a manner that will protect the commonwealth's natural resources and the environment. The office develops policy and programs for the regulation of oil and gas development and production pursuant to the Oil and Gas Act, the Coal and Gas Resource Coordination Act, and the Oil and Gas Conservation Law; oversees the oil and gas permitting and inspection programs; develops statewide regulation and standards; conducts training programs for industry; and works with the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission and the Technical Advisory Board.

From the Oil and Gas page, people can also get to a range of fact sheets that cover topics from drilling and production information, to landowner information regarding oil and gas leases. There's also reports and statistics, laws and regulatory information, permit and drilling information, current industry news, and industry-related training workshops.

Clicking on the “Gas Production Reports” box located in the center of DEP’s home page will get you to their electronic reporting website. This first-of-its-kind tool is designed to provide the public with greater insight into oil and gas operations across the state. The site is designed to make the activities of drilling companies and their business partners more transparent.

The electronic reporting website allows users to view historical oil and gas well production information from conventional shallow wells and newer Marcellus wells, as well as data on the waste each operation produces. All information presented is as reported by the industry in accordance with Pennsylvania law. Users can search for information by well permit number, by operator ID, by county or for the entire state. The information on waste generated by oil and gas wells is available by operator, by county or by waste facility. There is also operator information, well details, new information and frequently asked questions. The site also allows you to generate and download raw data easily for further analysis.

DEP’s web site is a valuable educational tool. It’s also a valuable resource for information on the natural gas industry and a range of other environmental topics.