

Natural Gas Industry Brings New Jobs, Business, Economic Strength to Area

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.

It goes without saying that the natural gas industry has had a large impact on the local workforce and many local businesses. Several gas related companies have set up shop in the area the last 12 to 24 months, and several established businesses have benefitted from the industry influx.

First, let's look at some numbers from the Marcellus Shale and new, gas industry related businesses that have arrived in Clinton County.

The unofficial number of jobs created directly by natural gas related businesses that have located in Clinton County stands at approximately 289 employees as of mid-April. Based on comments from officials at the businesses, that number will only climb in the next six to 12 months. If you add the 46 Clinton County residents that have been hired by Williamsport-based Guardsmark, the number increases to 335.

Leading the way in terms of employee numbers is Trican Well Services, which located in Lamar Township last August. The company has 108 employees. About 20 of those employees were transferred in from Canada and Texas. The rest were all local or regional hires.

Gas Field Specialists Inc., located on the former Buffalo Inn property in Dunnstable Township, has 55 employees.

HB Rentals in Lamar Township, Key Energy in Lamar Township, and Select Energy Services in Pine Creek Township all have 20 or more employees.

Several companies have indicated they plan to hire more employees over the next couple of months. Anadarko Petroleum Corp. and its midstream operation has two employees at Bald Eagle Court in McElhattan, and plans to hire a couple more. Three or four will be hired for the company's operations at the City airport in Lock Haven (Anadarko has 45 employees at its Williamsport office location).

Weavertown Environmental Group in Wayne Township, Wellhead Distributors of Woolrich, and HB Rentals, among others, all have indicated they will need to hire more employees in the coming months.

When the PVS Alkali Terminal opens in Castanea, Arrow Material Services figures to add to its seven employees, who are based at the South Avis Realty yard (Jersey Shore Steel).

McJunkin Red Man Corp., a supply company which is planning a June 1 move into a 17,000 square foot facility that is being built by Gas Field Specialists off Route 150, has four employees and will soon add two more.

These companies have also been providing a boost to local businesses, giving them a nice, unanticipated boost the last year or so.

"We try to do as much as possible locally," said Tom Fuchs of Weavertown Environmental Group. "We bought a copier from Willits, our boots at Kauffman's, we have trucks worked on at Bob McCormick, and we buy material at Walker's Hardware. I can't even begin to tell you how much we have spent locally on dining and lodging."

Weavertown Environmental has five employees, and plans to have at least five more by July 1. The company attended the April 7 job fair at Careerlink, and hopes to hire a couple of the people that visited that day. "We were well received and it was a good job fair," said Fuchs.

Love's Disposal is one local company that has benefitted from the arrival of the gas industry. The company has added a handful of employees and now has 14. It has also purchased new equipment, and has had its "box dumpster" business increase by 35 to 40 a year, with many of the dumpsters going to the well sites and where man camps have been set up.

"We made the decision to get in it in 2009, and we are glad we did," said Gayle Love of his company's support role to the natural gas industry. "The phone rings all the time. It is 24/7, and we are glad it is."

Fox Hollow Construction, based in Porter Township, is another company that has grown because of the gas industry.

"We went from basically one employee to 11 employees, all within the last five months or so," said Doreen Strouse of Fox Hollow. "It is all because of the gas industry. It has been great."

The company does a lot of erosion and sedimentation control for the industry, and had the snow plowing and road maintenance for many of the well sites in the state forest land. Strouse said the snow plowing and maintenance work was essentially around the clock this past winter.

Tom Charles of Charles Construction says "virtually all" of his company's work is related to the gas industry.

"We build roads, build their well pads and their frac ponds," he said. "We have probably added 15 people the last couple of years because of it and we have about 50 employees now. It's been very good."

The impacts on local businesses have been very positive. Take a look at the Sheetz parking lot any morning about 5:00 a.m. and see the trucks getting ready to roll out. When Trican first came to town, the company used no less than four local contractors in renovating the former Pine Creek Structures facility in Lamar Township. The seismic testers recently stayed at the Sportsman's Hotel near Renovo. Take a look any night at the full or nearly full parking lots of the local hotels. Local trucks are running trucks virtually non-stop. Roads have been repaired by local crews. Just about every night, you can find a gas industry related person dining out somewhere. The Wayne Township Landfill has generated more tonnage, meaning more financial support for the County and the Township. The list could go on and on.

The amount of new gas industry related businesses locating in the County will likely only expand over the next year or so, as will the impact on existing businesses.

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