

Natural Gas Column Marks One-Year Anniversary; Input Sought on Subjects for Future Columns

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.

A year ago tomorrow will mark the one-year anniversary of the establishment of this weekly column. On September 26, 2010, the inaugural article, titled “Understanding the Marcellus Shale Play,” was published through a cooperative effort by the Public Education sub-committee of the Clinton County Natural Gas Task Force and The Express community newspaper. That partnership has resulted in a total of 50 articles being written over the past year.

James Ladlee, director of the Penn State Cooperative Extension office in Clinton County, director of special initiatives for the Marcellus Shale Education and Training Center, and a member of the County’s Natural Gas Task Force, has led the charge for putting out factual, balanced information regarding the Marcellus Shale and the natural gas industry and its impacts on our area. With support from several other sub-committee members, it has been Ladlee’s task to put together the weekly information, or to make sure information from a knowledgeable source is available for the column.

Since late September 2010, topics for this weekly column have focused on educating people about the Marcellus Shale, a rock formation 5,000 to 8,000 feet below the surface of roughly 70% of Clinton County (overall, the Marcellus Shale Play covers 95,000 square miles in portions of Pennsylvania, Maryland, West Virginia, Ohio, and New York and is estimated to contain up to 489 trillion cubic feet of natural gas making the Marcellus the largest natural gas field in the continental United States and one of the largest fields in the world). Other articles have discussed the drilling process, known as fracing, the number of drilling permits that have been obtained and how many wells are in production in Clinton and neighboring counties.

Still other columns have focused on environmental issues such as new regulations impacting the gas industry, watershed monitoring and erosion and sediment pollution control with regarding to natural gas drilling activities.

Articles have highlighted what’s happening in response to community concerns, in particular in the areas of public safety and private drinking water supplies.

There have been articles on activities that are occurring in conjunction with natural gas drilling, including seismic surveying, land leasing, water withdrawals to support drilling, and natural gas pipelines to transport the gas once it has been captured.

Much of the information in the weekly column has focused on local impacts from the gas industry; how the industry has affected employment in our area, new jobs that have been created, workforce and training needs and economic development and business growth due to the industry. The column has also covered impacts of the natural gas industry on education and our local school district, local rail and road traffic, the county landfill, and community planning.

Other articles have sought to draw people to gas industry-related activities, including the Oil and Gas Expo this past May and the MEET-U mobile energy education and training trailer that was here in the area in conjunction with the Expo.

In addition to the articles appearing weekly in this newspaper, each column is available for reference on the Clinton County government web site (www.clintoncountypa.com), under the Natural Gas Task Force page.

“One of the objectives of establishing the weekly column was to assure a regular flow of factual, unbiased information to the public,” says Ladlee. “We continue to look for people’s thoughts and ideas for future columns.”

People with suggestions are encouraged to contact Ladlee via e-mail at jrl110@psu.edu or by phone at 726-0022, extension 128.

To become more informed of what’s happening locally with the natural gas industry, people can also attend the monthly Natural Gas Task Force meetings, which are held the last Tuesday of the month at 4:00 p.m. in the third floor conference room at the County’s Garden Building in Lock Haven. The meetings are open to the public and typically entail reports from each of the Task Force sub-committees. In addition to the public education sub-committee, the other sub-committees include workforce development, economic development, environmental, public safety, transportation and education.



An aerial view of one of the natural gas drilling sites in the region. Photo courtesy of Rich Wykoff.