



Penn State Cooperative Extension Receives Community Service Award From Upper Delaware Council Inc.

Natural gas exploration has become a polarizing issue in the Upper Delaware River Valley.

New technology has facilitated the ability to drill and extract the Marcellus Shale deposits of natural gas that are believed to underlie 36% of the Delaware River Basin in northeastern Pennsylvania and southern New York.

The dilemma has focused on how to balance the rights of individuals to share in the industry's profits by leasing their properties with protecting against any negative impacts on the greater community.

As regulators from both states and the Delaware River Basin Commission gear up to handle the expected permit applications, local landowners have been eager to find a source of objective information to arm themselves with knowledge.

Penn State Cooperative Extension heard, and answered, that call for help.

They've been accomplishing it through the establishment of comprehensive websites, an E-classroom and interactive blog; a series of live on-line webinars; the publication of numerous fact sheets, reports, and articles; and offering discount water testing services for property owners to record pre-drilling baselines.

Through its local offices in Pike and Wayne Counties, Extension has reached out with public presentations aimed at interested citizens, property owners, municipal leaders, agency representatives, and fellow educators. They participated in 15 advertised programs in 2008 alone, and sometimes fielded over 10 calls a day on this subject.

The presentations have addressed lease considerations, the natural gas extraction process, geology, industry regulations, managing royalty income, drinking water protection, and community impacts. Other topics have ranged from local government's role in gas exploration to the effects of deep-well drilling methods on water supplies.

With Wayne's Cooperative Extension office in Honesdale dating back 90 years, and the Pike office in Milford recently celebrating its 85th anniversary, their staffs are well-experienced in providing educational services. Even they marvel at the intensity of interest in this particular subject though.

For serving as a qualified reference and helping the public make some sense of these complicated issues, we present the Community Service Award to Penn State Cooperative Extension. Accepting from the Pike County office is Peter Wulfhorst and from the Wayne County office, Dave Messersmith.