

Marcellus Shale Informational Conference for School Officials Being Planned

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. – School districts in the Marcellus Shale region of Pennsylvania can expect significant impacts as a result of the booming natural gas drilling industry. The growing industry has significant implications for Pennsylvania’s schools, school districts, and career and technology centers.

The impacts of the gas industry are the theme of an upcoming one-day conference being planned at Penn State for school district administrators and educators.

The March 15 conference, “Understanding and Preparing for Marcellus Shale Impacts in Your School District,” will be held at the Nittany Lion Inn on Penn State’s University Park campus. Educators, school administrators, and community stakeholders in the gas-drilling region are urged to attend.

The conference is designed to help participants make important decisions aimed at minimizing the challenges and maximizing the benefits associated with gas development in their areas. Participants will have a chance to network and share ideas with their peers.

The event is being organized by the Center on Rural Education and Communities (CREC) and the Pennsylvania School Study Council (PSSC), in cooperation with the Penn State Marcellus Center for Outreach and Research (MCOR) and the Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools. CREC and PSSC are entities of Penn State’s College of Education.

“We are very much looking forward to this event, which represents the first effort to pull together a broad and interdisciplinary spectrum of people and perspectives to address the impacts of Marcellus gas development on schools,” said **Kai Schafft**, CREC director and associate professor of educational leadership and rural sociology. “It also represents a major initiative by the College of Education to weigh in on this critical issue facing Pennsylvania and Pennsylvanians.”

The conference will feature panel discussions and presentations by researchers, workforce development specialists, administrators, and industry representatives. Among the speakers will be U.S. Rep. Glenn Thompson (R-Pa.) and State Rep. Mike Hanna, D-Lock Haven.

Topics will address community and school impacts of gas development with regard to enrollment changes, transportation issues, workforce development, fiscal health, school-industry partnerships and coordination, and student guidance.

“Shale exploration and production offers opportunities for students interested in a mix of careers from geology to engineering to construction,” said **Jim Ladlee**, MCOR associate director and one of the conference presenters. “Understanding how shale development works and what jobs are required are key for school districts wanting to help students take advantage of these opportunities.”

Registration deadline is February 27. For more information, visit <http://www.ed.psu.edu/educ/pssc/announcements/save-the-date-marcellus-shale-impact-conference.html>. You may also contact **Sue Tighe**, PSSC assistant director, by e-mail at slt11@psu.edu or by phone at 814-865-0321.