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Groups want lawmakers to pass rules on Marcellus drilling

By Ben Adducchio

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February 14, 2011 · Drilling for natural gas in the recently tapped Marcellus shale is presenting a number of opportunities and challenges in West Virginia.

Some citizens groups are concerned about the state keeping up with regulating the process.

Marcellus gas drilling is an activity that's drawing both interest and in many cases, concern, from local residents.

Standards on gas drilling that would regulate how water is managed haven't made it through the state legislature.

Barry Pally is the co-chair of the West Virginia-Pennsylvania Monongahela Area Watersheds Compact.

"We don't have minimum standards; we don't have new standards for this new industry. We don't have minimum standards for total dissolved solids," Pally said.

In addition to new water management rules, the state Department of Environmental Protection wants to increase gas drilling permit fees from \$650 to \$10,000 to help pay for more staff.

Pally is also concerned about the lack of inspectors---there are 17 state inspectors who need to monitor more than 55,000 wells in the state.

"Even if we were to adopt the standards in this legislative session, the problem is without sufficient inspectors it's not meaningful because you can't cover all the issues, and so on and so forth, that need to be addressed," Pally said.

Hiring more inspectors is one of 16 resolutions the watershed compact passed.

The group sent a letter to Acting Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin requesting a meeting to discuss these concerns.

In past years, Monongalia County Del. Barbara Evans **Fleischauer** introduced bills in the state legislature that would have created regulations on drilling and adopted a water quality standard in West Virginia.

But the bills failed to pass. **Fleischauer** continues to try, sponsoring a new bill this legislative session.

"We want to get our ducks in a row so that the public is protected and I think if industry is really responsible, they're going to eventually be able to develop this resource, but we need to make sure that we protect our land, and our citizens for the future," she

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Huntington police crackdown on drugs

By Clark Davis

Huntington police and federal authorities announced today a successful investigation that has thwarted drug crimes in that city.

Former Wheeling Pitt plants sold, again

By Keri Brown

Russia-based Severstal is selling some of its North American assets including its steel plants in Ohio and West Virginia. New York-based Renco Group announced yesterday it has sealed a deal with the company to buy the former Wheeling Pittsburgh Steel plants.

WV has many federal jobs

By Cecelia Mason

Congress has extended federal government operations another two weeks but if the government were to shut down, West Virginia's economy could be impacted more than other states.

House approves pay raises

By Tom Miller

Teachers, school service personnel, the state police and other state employees will get a small pay raise thanks to legislation that passed the House of Delegates yesterday.

Senate passes Marcellus gas, coal severance bills

By Erica Peterson

Senators had a number of issues on their calendar today, and passed bills establishing an Intermediate Court of Appeals, allowing breastfeeding in public places and capping property appraisals. But the bills that drew the most discussion had to do with West Virginia's extractive industries.

said.

Chesapeake Energy is one of the companies drilling for natural gas in the state. It's the largest leaseholder of Marcellus Shale in Appalachia.

Scott Rotruck is the vice president of Corporate Development and Government Relations at Chesapeake.

"We want a good, strong regulatory program, that's well staffed, and well-executed and well-funded," Rotruck said.

"We'll engage in any discussion about the Marcellus shale that people want us to engage in. We want to be available, we want to answer questions, and we want to be involved."

Barry Pallay says he's optimistic that two bills pending in the legislature will pass this year.

"We'll try to work together so that we can hopefully have something passed in this; this is the third time, hopefully the third time is the charm," he said.

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