

VOTER

League of Women Voters of
Indiana County, Pennsylvania
www.palwv.org/indiana



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Great Decisions 2009

Update your knowledge about controversial foreign policy issues by attending the Great Decisions Lecture/Discussion Series on Tuesday mornings from 9:30—11:30 a.m. in February/ March.

Expert speakers from IUP present on selected topics in the comfortable setting of St. Andrew's Village Community Room. A briefing book on issues and questions is prepared by the nonpartisan Foreign Policy Association (see www.fpa.org)

This year's eight topics include: **The U.S. and rising powers, Afghanistan and Pakistan, Energy & the global economy, The Arctic age, Egypt in the 21st century, Global food supply, Cuba after Castro, Universal human rights?**

For further information and registration brochure, contact Rick McFerron at IUP Continuing Education (724-357-2292).



LWVIC MERGES ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEES

At the December Board meeting we decided to merge the Air Quality Issues Committee and the Marcellus Shale Study Committee. It appears that several air quality concerns have come up during the study and it seems logical that both committees become involved.

The next meeting will be January 22 at Mary Beth Sweeney's home at 7:00 pm. The committee will start discussing possible consensus questions. All members with an interest in environmental issues are welcome to come to this meeting.

ONLINE MARCELLUS SHALE SEMINARS

Penn State Cooperative Extension and Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences are offering a series of online seminars on the opportunities and challenges of Marcellus shale natural gas exploration and drilling.

The seminars started on Dec. 18 and will continue on Jan. 22, Feb. 19, March 18, April 16, and May 21. They will include such topics as landowners' rights, off-site impacts, and the role of government.

Individuals can register for each seminar online at:

<http://natural.gas.extension.psu.edu/Events.htm>

Shortly before each seminar, registrants will receive an email with additional information about how to connect online.

MORE ONLINE RESOURCES FOR THE MARCELLUS SHALE STUDY

Here are two other websites to check out for resources about Marcellus shale drilling:

www.riverreporter.com/issues/08-12-04fracking.pdf Discusses the chemicals present in the water used for fracking (cracking the rock holding the natural gas) wells.

www.depweb.state.pa.us/dep/cwp/view.asp?a=3&q=542874 Testimony of John Hanger, Acting Secretary of DEP before the PA Senate Majority Policy Committee on 11/18/08 on Marcellus shale drilling.

RAMIFICATIONS OF DRILLING IN THE MARCELLUS SHALE

The present promises jobs. Extracting the gas from the Marcellus Shale will create between 50,000 and 100,000 new jobs in Pennsylvania over the next few decades as the state becomes a hub for natural gas pipelines and storage. The future is already here in Chartiers Township (Washington County) where a refrigeration plant can process 30 mcf per day. A cryogenic plant is being built on the same site to extract propane from the gas stream.

The future includes the availability and disposal of the tainted water. Fracking each well requires two to seven million gallons to which drillers add chemicals (i.e. benzene, arsenic, sand, and more). The pressurized water goes down the well casing and breaks or fractures the shale. The natural gas, released from the shale, rushes upward, and pushes much of the water back out of the well. The water needed for fracking can come from streams and/or ground water supplies, the same sources used by municipal water suppliers and private wells.

Getting rid of the toxic water is not simple. The water will contain the chemicals added for the fracking, plus salt, metals, acid, and uranium pyrite, the source of radon. Industrial waste water disposal is currently done at eight sites statewide, three of which are in Indiana County—Creekside, Josephine, and Tunnelton. Any new plant will take two to three years to build. Municipal sewage plants along the Monongahela River have been accepting drilling waste water, but in November 2008 the DEP ordered them to process no more than 1% of a plant's capacity because of the high levels of particulate matter in the river water.

(continued page 3)

The companies that frack the wells are resisting naming the chemicals they use, claiming the information is proprietary. Without knowing the chemicals in the water, disposal personnel may not clean the water adequately, thus releasing what the U.S. Department of Energy calls “the most toxic of any oil industry product” into the water system. The DEP says state law requires drillers to list the chemicals on their drilling permits.

On-site disposal in lined holding ponds is possible but not infallible. Colorado reports 300 leaking holding ponds. In New Mexico frack water leached from holding ponds into the water table.

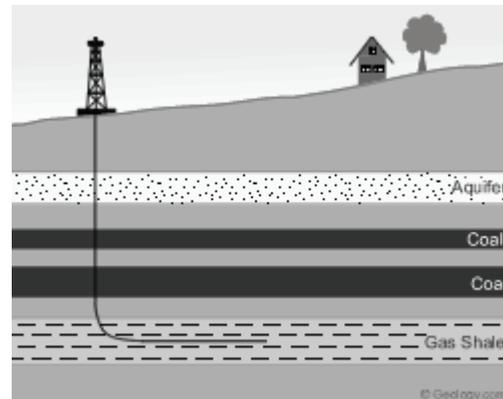
Technology to reclaim water may be becoming available. Ezonix Technology advertises a process that “provides clean water and clean brine water.” Texas-based Devon Energy can reclaim and recycle 24% of the 3.5 million gallons used during the fracturing of a Barnett Shale well in Texas (drillers are using the same technology to extract gas from Marcellus Shale). Other technology under-way includes portable evaporators and crystalizers. The evaporator produces 70% distilled and usable water for the next well, leaving 30% as concentrated brine. The crystalizer would distill 98%, leaving 2% brine.

Trucking waste water and the subsequent road wear is a concern. Current road bonding is \$12,500 per mile, less than the cost to resurface a mile of pavement. It would take 600 loads for a truck with a 4,200 gallon capacity to truck 2.5 million gallons of water to bring water to the well site and another 600 loads to truck the water off site.

Land use is also an issue. A Marcellus Shale well site typically consumes four to five acres because multiple wells are drilled at the one site. Well maintenance trucks will continue use roads leading to the site and roads established on the private property. Pipe lines, above ground or buried, will limit the use of the surface land. Future commercial and residential developments can not be built on top of high pressure gas lines. Above ground pipelines will limit farmers’ mobility as well as development.

Susan McClure

One of the biggest issues that environmentalists have with hydraulic fracturing is that the companies who use it have not been required to reveal the chemical additives. A bill introduced in Congress by Diana DeGette of Colorado would require companies to disclose drill site chemicals and subject them to the Clean Water Act.



MEMBER MEETINGS THIS MONTH

Don't forget the two educational opportunities this month.

First, on Jan 24 we will have a breakfast meeting at Fire Mountain Restaurant starting at 8:30 am to discuss the proposed National Popular Vote Compact proposal. Our speaker will be Dr. Ed Platt, retired Political Science professor from IUP. He will discuss the electoral college and proposals for change.

Second, the League of Women Voters of Indiana County, with many community partners, will be holding a workshop for citizens interested in running for local political office. It will be held at the Rustic Lodge on Jan. 31 starting at 8:30 am. Registration is \$40 dollars and includes both a light breakfast and lunch.

Look for potential candidates among your friends and acquaintances and consider running yourself.

A newsletter of the
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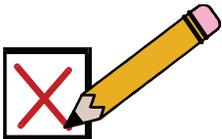


We're on the
Web!

www.palwv.org/indiana



CALENDAR of UPCOMING EVENTS



*Know someone who
may be interested in
membership? Let Olga
Platt know at 724-
465-2073 and she
will send a brochure &
short letter describing
LWVIC's activities.*

January 16, 2009 – Board Meeting, Diane Duntley's home, 7:00 pm.

January 22, 2009 – Marcellus Shale Study Committee meeting, 7:00 pm. Mary Beth Sweeney's home, 295 Elm St., Indiana.

January 24, 2009 – Member meeting, National Popular Vote Compact Study. 8:30 am. Fire Mountain Restaurant for breakfast. Separate Checks.

January 31, 2009 – Local Candidate workshop, 8:30 am to 2:00 pm. Rustic Lodge, Indiana.

February 17, 2009 – Marcellus Shale Dinner member meeting. 6:00 pm. Eat n' Park Restaurant.

February, 2009 - Legislative Breakfasts.

March 14, 2009 – Family Fun Fest. 10:00 am – 3 pm. Indiana Mall. Theme: 110 Best Books for Children.

April – Marcellus Shale Study Consensus.

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Membership is open to men and women of voting age.