

TIOGA COUNTY AND MARCELLUS SHALE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT: REFLECTIONS ON A COMMUNITY COMPACT WITH THE ENERGY INDUSTRY

Tioga and adjoining counties find themselves at the center of an energy development boom that most citizens and communities of the region could not have even imagined just a few years ago. At this point much of the available land in the region is leased to gas drilling operators who completed 1386 wells in Pennsylvania in 2010 alone, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. There are expectations of wells being drilled across virtually every square mile of the Marcellus region. Gas pipelines are being installed, or increased in capacity, and a variety of related enterprises and technical operations are joining the boom with new business sites emerging as each week passes.

The impact on the region is assuredly in its early stages, and many citizens have discussed the changes in our communities and existing commerce, including the impact on tourism, employment, transportation, housing availability, the environment, and community health and wellness. Virtually no individual, business, institution, or government entity is unaffected by the energy development. The magnitude and economics of the boom mean that most landowners and many businesses have a stake in the outcome, but many also have mixed feelings about the perceived long-term impact of the drilling industry on the region from aesthetic, economic and environmental perspectives.

For 18 years our Tioga County Partnership for Community Health has focused on the improvement of community health, individual and family wellbeing, and environmental matters as they relate to these issues. For the past 18 months our Planning Committee has attempted to educate its members about the likely impact of the gas industry on community health and quality of life, and it now seems appropriate that the Partnership propose a set of principles for communities and the energy industry to adopt if we are to improve and sustain the quality of life and health that have made our rural communities attractive to residents and visitors alike. We seek to develop a relationship between communities and the gas industry based on a set of principles that recognizes the importance of respect for each other and the sustainability of our communities.

Toward that end we propose a transparent and public compact or agreement between communities, businesses, local governing entities, and the gas industry that respects environmental, aesthetic, and economic interests as well as community health and wellbeing. The extensiveness and scope of this industry give rise to both hope and concern regarding potential outcomes for communities, businesses, and residents; it is therefore reasonable to expect the energy industry to express commitment to a shared vision of a vibrant Tioga County.

We believe that our community, government leaders and relevant organizations and agencies have a responsibility to:

- Provide reliable, factual information about communities and Marcellus development
- Assist gas industry representatives in planning, maintaining, and enhancing the quality of life in Tioga County as it relates to the growing needs generated by their presence
- Provide access to high quality education
- Provide access to high quality healthcare
- Provide customized training through regional educational institutions for gas industry employees
- Provide a qualified local workforce

- Provide access to a broad range of recreational opportunities
- Provide a vibrant and diverse faith community
- Provide law enforcement support and maintain a low crime rate
- With assistance from state and local government, provide support for
 - Regional planning
 - Roads and related maintenance
 - Municipal services
 - Traffic management
 - Addressing environmental issues and concerns
- With utility companies, support access to the public utilities needed by gas-related businesses
- Support a positive working relationship with local media for appropriate and unbiased dissemination of information to the public.

In return, we recommend that natural gas related businesses:

- Commit to and be held publically accountable to a high standard of stewardship for the region we share with them
- Develop their well and related business locations in ways that maintain or improve the natural rural environment, for example by installing natural greenways or landscaping that shelters highways from unsightly industrial or business sites
- Expect subcontractors supporting the major operators to commit to principles of community and environmental stewardship as a condition of their relationship with the major operators
- Encourage the use of local employees and subcontractors
- Repair responsibly any damage to roadways and the environment and ensure that pipeline and well-pad sites are promptly restored to states of natural beauty
- Devote a portion of their revenue to the development and maintenance of community downtown areas, highway intersections, and public parks
- Support nonprofit agencies and organizations that work on behalf of citizens and communities
- Financially support :
 - safety improvements along dangerous areas of highways that are frequented by trucks that support the industry
 - emergency response services such as ambulance and rescue units within our communities
 - health and hospital services
- Support the development of appropriate housing and ensure that accommodations for industry employees are attractive, safe, and well-maintained
- Demonstrate in action a commitment to community health and quality of life as well as the longer-term economic well-being of the region.

Toward these ends, we believe it is reasonable for energy industry businesses—and, indeed, all entities—to identify sufficient funding and human resources to ensure their stewardship of the region and to support positive and trustworthy partnerships with state and local government agencies and community organizations. Our Tioga County Partnership for Community Health offers this draft document for discussion and invites and encourages such



cooperation and collaboration. We stand ready to facilitate and participate in the discussions needed among community and agency leaders to ensure we plan wisely for the future needs of our communities, our businesses, our environment, and our quality of life.

Deborah Adkins, Executive Director

Peter A. Keller, Chair, Executive Committee

Connect with the Tioga County Partnership for Community Health:

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...Please contact the Partnership if you would like your name to be included as an individual or organizational supporter of this compact.