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Chemung studies ways to protect roads from natural gas trucks

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Chemung County is studying ways to protect its roads from an anticipated invasion of trucks involved in natural gas exploration, and the Town of Southport has agreed to be the guinea pig.

A committee of town highway superintendents, county public works officials and representatives from the sheriff's office, among others, is looking at ways to adopt uniform standards that can be enforced across the county.

Southport was chosen for a pilot study because it borders Pennsylvania, where Marcellus Shale exploration is already in full swing, and because its roads represent several different surface types.

The town is hiring an Endwell engineering firm to document current road conditions and to advise officials on policies regarding road weight limits, what roads can be used by the heavy trucks and other issues.

"It's only a matter of time before (Marcellus Shale exploration) becomes a full-blown project in New York state," said Southport Highway Superintendent Dave Bachman.

"We want some type of insurance as well as assurance that whatever is done to these roads or infrastructure will be repaired to the standards that they were or a level higher by these exploration companies."

There are more than 1,100 miles of roads in the county, said Roger Burlew, president of the Chemung County Highway Superintendents Association.

The committee wants to see a permitting process and bonding agreements put into place, and it's important that it be done across the board and not piecemeal, said Burlew, who is also Town of Erin highway superintendent.

"What we are looking to do is try to get a countywide plan so when you step into the county, the roads

are all protected under the same policy," Burlew said.

"That's more defensible than everyone having an individual policy. You can have all the regulations you want and if you can't defend them they are not worth a nickel."



A truck carries an oversize load in Bradford County. (File photo)

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