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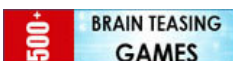


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Gas-drilling boom has region-changing power

POSTED: January 24, 2010

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When economic development people try to emphasize the impact the burgeoning natural gas drilling industry can have on the region, the naysayers roll their eyes, question the projections, and imply that more attention needs to be paid to possible damage to the area's environment and infrastructure.

We appreciate the vigilance for the environment and certainly hope the state Department of Environmental Protection does its job - reasonably - in that area.

And we want local municipalities generously reimbursed for the infrastructure needs that will be created by the industry.

But while we're doing due diligence, let's check the cynicism at the door.

The economic projections scream for a cooperative outlook.

At a meeting this past week, at which the Southern Tioga School board nixed plans to close the North Penn High School, an East Resources community resources manager told a packed North Penn High School auditorium of the industry's future impact on students, schools and curriculums.

Jack Showers said the Marcellus Shale "is the biggest economic opportunity the Northern Tier has ever had, bar none. It's coming and it's coming fast."

How big and how fast?

Showers said his company, while not as big as others in the area, is spending \$10 million a month extracting natural gas and plans to drill 6,500 wells.

He said Penn State is projecting 107,000 jobs will be created through Pennsylvania and New York this year. That's right. This year.

He said a high percentage of the jobs will be coming from the local populous but many management positions will be filled by people moving into the area. They will be bringing their families with them.

And as for their kids and others now in the area, Showers suggests a gentle nudging of them into the studies of geology and engineering because "the jobs are going to be here for the next 25 to 50 years."

Remember, Showers admits the firm he represents is hardly the largest working here on behalf of the natural gas industry.

All of the economic numbers he projected represent the largest economic opportunity in modern times in our region. While it is healthy to safeguard our environment, hold true to industry regulations and protect municipal infrastructure, all that needs to be done with those numbers in mind.

We live in a state that has coddled a gambling industry for a decade with little tangible benefits to show for it.

That's where the cynicism belongs.

Where the natural gas boom is concerned, we need to grow up, bring a can-do spirit to the development and start acting like we're ready to take full advantage of a world-class economic opportunity.

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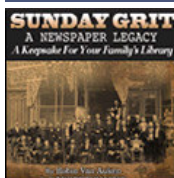
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