

Property owners meet on DRBC regulations

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Wayne Independent

Posted Feb 18, 2011 @ 05:24 PM

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Honesdale, Pa. — Representatives of property owner groups from northern Wayne County, as well as Delaware and Sullivan County, Ny., gathered Friday morning for a media briefing on the Delaware River Basin Commission natural gas development draft regulations.

“The Delaware River Basin Commission is creating a set of regulations, an additional set of rules to live by for Wayne County, over and above regulations that our municipalities, our county and our state already have. So they are trying to grab authority over land-use matters in Wayne County and it directly affects our ability to enjoy economic opportunities here within the county,” said Marion Schweighofer, executive director of the Northern Wayne Property Owner’s Alliance.

Though they’re pleased the DRBC released the draft regulations back in December, giving them something to work with, Schweighofer says section 7.5 is “backwards. Instead of the DRBC having the ultimate, all powering authority and the states being underneath them, it needs to be the other way around.”

The states needs to be able to maintain their authority and the DRBC should be involved in the process through the states, she said.

“The DRBC’s been working towards draft regulations just shy of three years and they have absolutely zero experience in gas and oil,” she said. “As a result, we have draft regulations that were built on a series of false premises and misunderstandings.

“The DRBC created a map that says 36 percent of this watershed is underlain by Marcellus Shale...They assume that 18,000 wells will be drilled, 2,200 pads will be created, they’ll have a huge net loss, and potential pollution to the river. That’s their assumptions,” Schweighofer said. “ They use that as a justification as to why they had to create the draft regulations as we have them now.”

Schweighofer says the problem lies in the DRBC’s percentages. “Thirty-six percent of the watershed doesn’t have producible gas. What we actually have is producible gas in many 1,700 square miles of the watershed. Out of that 1,700 square miles, we know that 664 square miles will not be allowed to be drilled because it is part of the New York City reservoir. So, when you do the math, that only leaves, at maximum, 1,100 square miles that might see production drilling. That is only 8 percent of the water shed,” she says.

People can comment on the draft regulations at upcoming DRBC hearings.

A public hearing is being held Tuesday, Feb. 22, at the Honesdale High School, 1:30 to 5 p.m. and 6 to 9:30 p.m.

For more information, go to www.naturalgasnow.info/DRBC.

“Our goal is to protect the environment, the water resources, and the surfaces of our properties, but at the same time have win-win regulations that will allow responsible gas production to move forward. Without final regs from DRBC, we can not move forward with gas exploration or production,” Schweighofer said.

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