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Shale commission touts economic benefits of natural gas; some call for more regulation

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HARRISBURG - The governor's Marcellus Shale Advisory Commission began its work Friday with many members touting the future economic promise of plentiful natural gas reserves and a handful calling for more state regulation of gas drilling operations.

The 30-member commission is charged with developing a comprehensive plan to guide development of Pennsylvania's extensive Marcellus Shale gas deposits into the next century.

Facing a four-month deadline to complete its work, commission members gave their own personal assessments about the opportunities and challenges

of developing the Marcellus Shale reserves.

Northeast Pennsylvania got its first seat at the commission table with the arrival of Richard J. Allan, just nominated by Gov. Tom Corbett to head the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. A commercial recycler, Allan has longstanding ties to Luzerne County and environmental groups in the region.

Asked about his providing a Northeast perspective to the commission's work, Allan declined comment.

The commission includes Corbett cabinet secretaries, representatives from the drilling industry, including Chesapeake Energy and Chief Oil & Gas, and leaders of several environmental groups and local government associations.

An upbeat assessment of Marcellus Shale's potential benefits was offered by Lt. Gov. Jim Cawley, the commission chairman.

"I see a Pennsylvania where phrases like 'brain drain' and 'rust belt' are things of the past," he said.

Many commission members used a catchphrase heard frequently at the Capitol in connection with Marcellus Shale's future - "We've got to do it right" - to preface their views.

"If we do it right, we can be the model for other states and the federal government," said Alan Walker, secretary-designate of the Department of Community and Economic Development.

The adoption last year of new state regulations to limit pollutants in drilling wastewater, require drillers to use stronger cement in wells and disclose more information about chemicals used in fracking fluids enables state regulators to protect the public from drilling activities, Scott Perry, director of the Bureau of Oil and Gas Management in the Department of Environmental Protection, told the commission.

Perry said DEP has more oil and gas inspectors than some drilling states like Oklahoma and can quickly add more inspectors if needed by amending state regulations to increase the driller permit fees that help pay for enforcement efforts.

But officials of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, an environmental advocacy group that has a seat on the commission, called state regulations inadequate.

Pennsylvania will have to revise its watershed protection plan to address the cumulative load of nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment from the natural gas industry, said Lee Ann Murray, a CBF attorney.

"There are additional issues such as bonding, setbacks, fines, pad-siting, post construction stormwater runoff, which bear closer scrutiny," said Matt Ehrhart, CBF Pennsylvania director.

Part of the commission's mandate is to offer recommendations to help local communities deal with the impact of the drilling boom. To that end, James Felmlee, president of the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs, called for a law allowing local governments to charge an impact fee to offset the effect of drilling operations on roads, water supplies and air quality.

The commissioners heard a presentation on economic development from the Institute for Public Policy & Economic Development, an academic consortium with offices in Scranton and Wilkes-Barre.

During a public comment period, Patrick Walker, Factoryville, a member of the Gas Drilling Awareness Coalition, said the commission needs to give serious consideration to scientific studies about the impact of natural gas drilling on greenhouse gas emissions and climate change.



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The commission will meet on a monthly basis with members splitting up to do preparation in four working groups.

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Gov. Tom Corporate has the fox gurdng the hen house.

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Rausch Land has already pulled the permits, It's a done deal. Invest in bottle water. Be sure to donate to the American Cancer Society , let's hope they find a cure before the drilling begins.

20 years from now, you can explain to your grandchildren, why you thought toxic hydraulic fracturing was a good idea. Dave Argall and Tim Holden will be 70 years old, still in some sort of political capacity, seeking grants for the clean up and reclamation.

In 20 years, Barefield will own 80% of Pottsville, it will be one big halfway house for county prisoners, since they didn't build the pre-release center. Mantura Gallagher will be named honorary Winter Carnival Queen.

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People involved in this are up on racketering charges---google rousch creek land.
 And there is no attempt to stop this?????????
 Must have court house connections.

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If there is nothing in it for us and the area----KEEP THEM OUT WE DONT NEED THE MESS,OR THE CONTAMINATED WATER.



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Wow what a nice group of people, all hand picked by Gov Corbett, give me a break, this is a waste of tax payer dollars.

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This is anoter example of appearance instead of substance. Corbett has created a Politburo of industry hacks that will control the agenda with this commission. To eliminate abuses of this type we need national regulations to establish a bar and control the polieitical science that will definitely supersede real science in the decision making just like the state's flyash program that is poisoning the county and surrounding counties. We don't need polliticians making decisions involving a matter of this magnitude we need GOOD SCIENCE provided by real scientists!!!

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