

# Natural Gas Task Forces in Pennsylvania

Kathy Brasier  
Dept. of Ag Econ and Rural Sociology  
Penn State Cooperative Extension

Prepared for the PA & NY Natural Gas Task Force Forum  
March 28, 2011  
Owego, NY

# Impacts of Marcellus Development

- ▶ Are broad-ranging
- ▶ Are rapid – and likely to speed up
- ▶ Will look different from one community to another, will require unique responses
- ▶ Are multi-jurisdictional and involve multiple lines of authority
- ▶ Will require responses that are multi-faceted
- ▶ Are dynamic – responses will need to change over time as development evolves

# Effective Responses Will Require...

- ▶ Coordination and communication – among partners, jurisdictions, agencies, organizations, related and ancillary businesses
- ▶ Broad public awareness and effective participation opportunities
- ▶ Resident and taxpayer acceptance and support
- ▶ On-going dialogue and discussion

*Several communities have formed Task Forces to manage this process*

Year of  
Formation

2008

2009

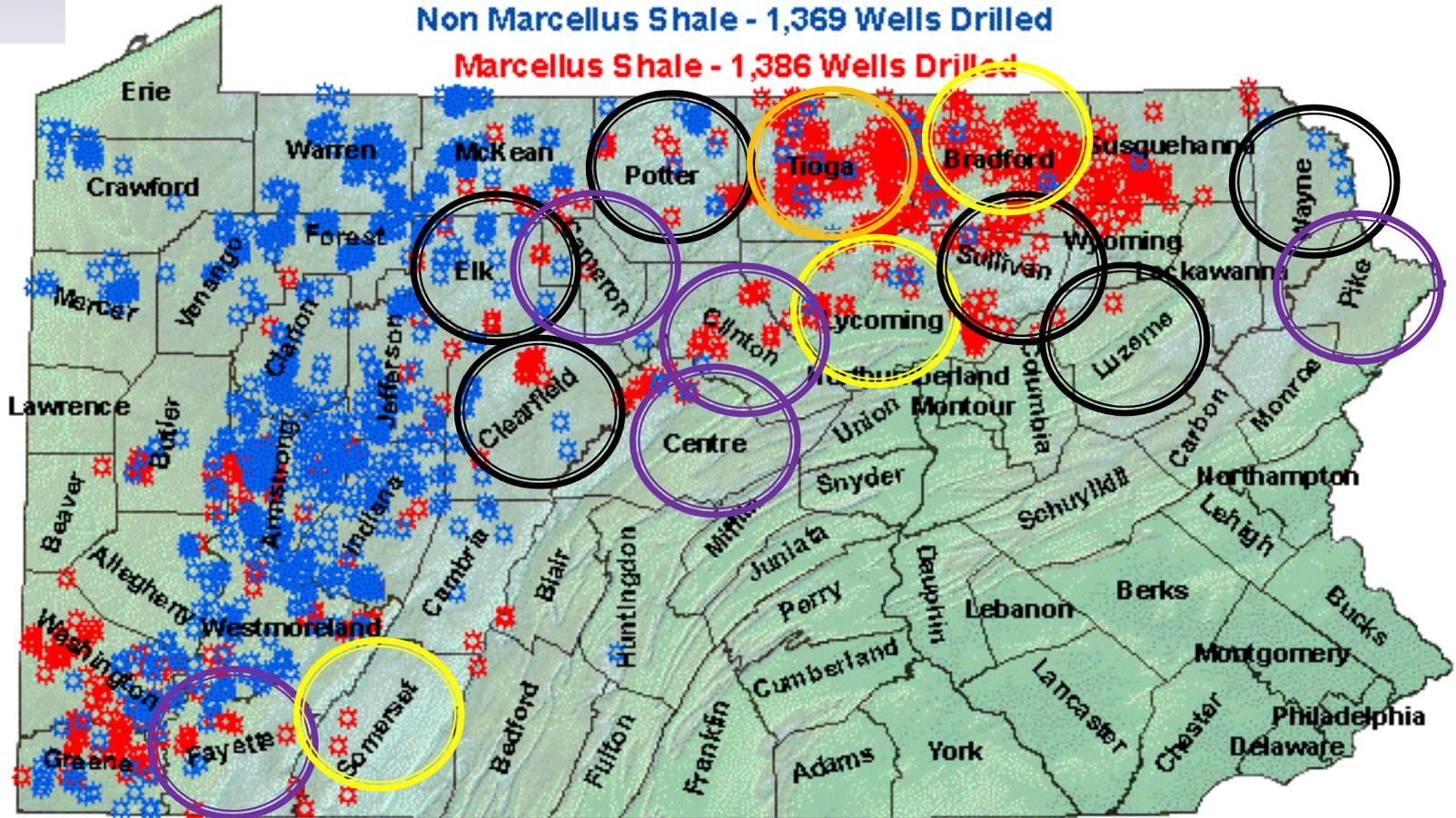
2010

# Department of Environmental Protection Bureau of Oil and Gas Management Wells Drilled

2010 January-December Wells Drilled - 2,755

Non Marcellus Shale - 1,369 Wells Drilled

Marcellus Shale - 1,386 Wells Drilled



As Reported by Operators

Updated 01/05/2011

# What are Natural Gas Task Forces?

- ▶ Coalition of local stakeholders working to address natural gas development issues at local level
- ▶ Generally advisory, ad hoc
- ▶ Sanctioned, organized by local government (commissioners)
- ▶ Staff support often provided through county commissioners or other county agency
- ▶ Provide regular, on-going discussion, educational opportunities

# Natural Gas Task Force Activities

- ▶ Pursue economic development opportunities
- ▶ Communicate with industry, public
- ▶ Match industry needs with community resources (office space, workforce, etc.)
- ▶ Provide public education opportunities
- ▶ Create and share model ordinances, practices
- ▶ Coordinate information and local services
- ▶ Identify emergency management strategies and techniques

# Leadership and Structure

- ▶ Commissioners initiate, provide continued leadership and staff support
- ▶ Leadership teams to oversee task force, make decisions, provide direction
- ▶ Subcommittees to focus on topic areas, bring suggestions to leadership team
  - Economic development
  - Environment
  - Education
  - Planning & zoning, infrastructure
  - Public policies, government relations
  - Public safety
  - Public relations, industry relations
  - Real estate

# Natural Gas Task Forces as Community Tool

- ▶ Address complex challenge in context of changing federal/state/local responsibilities
- ▶ Consolidation of organizations, resources, expertise
- ▶ Coordination of activities and resources to increase efficiency and impact
- ▶ Provides opportunity for greater citizen knowledge and participation
- ▶ Influence public policy and decision-making at local and state levels
- ▶ Entry point for public, industry, organizations, etc.

# Natural Gas Task Forces as Community Tool

- ▶ Build capacity for current AND future issues
  - Improving leadership skills
  - Creating new networks and relationships
  - Enhancing trust among different groups
  - Creating common understanding/definitions of issues
  - Developing information resources
- ▶ Increase likelihood of effective decision-making and coordinated action

# Task Force Flow



# Maximizing the Potential of Natural Gas Task Forces

»» Best Practices for Task Forces

# Planning for the Future

- ▶ Does the task force have an articulated plan as to:
  - Why you want or need a task force?
  - What goals you seek to achieve?
  - What outcomes you would like to see because of the task force?
  - Benchmarks so you know when you're making progress?
- ▶ Are all members of the task force aware of and understand this plan?
- ▶ If this plan exists, how often is it revisited and updated?

# Organize Goals and Projects

- ▶ To what extent is the Task Force working towards high priority goals?
  - Based on most immediate needs in community
  - The ones you'll get the biggest “bang for the buck”
- ▶ To what extent are projects organized to achieve stated goals?
  - Identify objectives and tasks it will take to achieve goals
  - Identify resources needed
  - Establish timelines
  - Identify individual responsibilities
  - Identify benchmarks
  - Regularly assess progress toward benchmarks

# Task Force Organization

- ▶ Does the organization of the Task Force reflect goals and objectives?
  - Do subcommittees reflect task force priority issues and goals?
  - Are all subcommittees represented on leadership team?
- ▶ Do task force members, committee chairs know their ‘jobs’?
- ▶ Are lines of authority and communication clear?

# Membership

- ▶ To what extent does the Leadership Team and Task Force membership:
  - Represent all stakeholders?
  - Provide visibility?
  - Build credibility?
  - Communicate broadly and openly?
  - Explore options creatively?
  - Provide diverse perspectives?
  - Bring essential skills and knowledge?
  - Draw in appropriate resources?

## Examples:

Local elected officials

County & municipal planning, other  
Local government agencies

Conservation Districts

Citizen, landowners, farmers groups

Educational institutions, Extension

Conservation districts

Civic, nonprofit organizations

Health and human service providers

Industry and business organizations

Fire, police, emergency responders

Relevant state, federal agencies,  
legislators

Environmental, sportsmen's groups

Economic development organizations

# Meeting Management

- ▶ How effective are task force and committee meetings?
- ▶ Establish agendas and share in advance
  - Have clear, manageable objectives
  - Allocate time appropriately to each objective
  - Track progress toward broader task force goals
  - Reflect most important issues
- ▶ Follow up with individuals regarding specific tasks
- ▶ Establish means for accountability

# Ensure Effective Facilitation

- ▶ Are meeting facilitators seen as fair, effective?
- ▶ Do facilitators have:
  - The skills and demeanor to do so professionally and inclusively
  - A real (and perceived) absence of bias or personal or organizational agenda
- ▶ Seek external facilitator as needed
- ▶ Additional tips:
  - Establish ground rules and mutual respect for all participants
  - Stay on track; respect agenda time allocation
  - Keep competing agendas, grandstanding and tangents to a minimum

# Create a Transparent Process

- ▶ Are processes, discussions, decisions:
  - Well-publicized?
  - Have few barriers to participation (time, place, knowledge, user-friendly, etc.)?
  - Seen as (and are) as inclusive as reasonable?
- ▶ Identify appropriate means for public participation
  - Serving on committees
  - Open meetings
  - Information gathering, issue identification and prioritization

# Establish Effective Communication

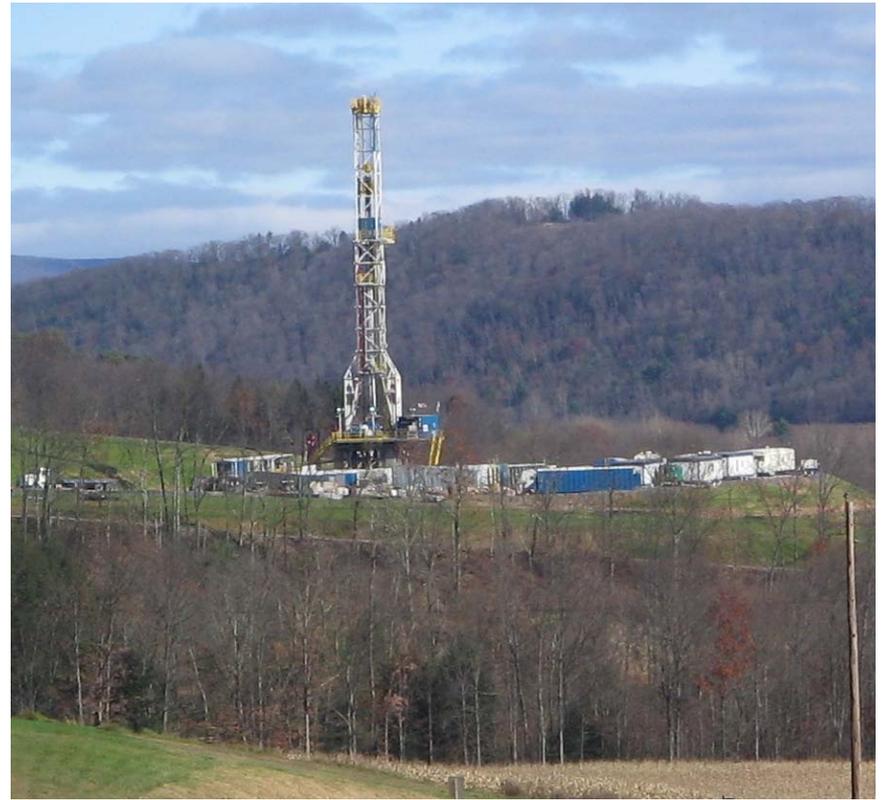
- ▶ How well does the Task Force communicate with internal and external stakeholders?
- ▶ Have a communications plan
  - Method will vary by stakeholder: newsletters, websites, Commissioners updates, etc.
  - Establish regular frequency
- ▶ Key for accountability, follow up, visibility
- ▶ Allows opportunities for on-going public input and suggestions

# Establish Accountability & Recognize Achievements

- ▶ Identify measures of success and benchmarks
- ▶ Make sure your measures are widely recognized and available
- ▶ Regular updates, public meetings, or publications
- ▶ How often are successes publicly recognized?
  - Projects completed
  - Goals reached
  - Special achievements
  - Individual contributions beyond the expected

# *Marcellus Education Team*

Penn State  
Cooperative  
Extension



<http://extension.psu.edu/naturalgas>

***Subscribe via email to receive regular  
updates from our website!***