

CLA



VIEWS

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President's Letter

By John Wadlin

Last year in this message I reported on an interesting voting case coming out of Bovina in Delaware County. Eight second-homeowners filed suit to gain the right to vote in Bovina even though they maintained other homes in the state near their employment. The local court had granted their request. An appeal ensued, and on October 23 the state Appellate Division upheld the ruling of the lower court.

No doubt you have heard of the activity surrounding potential drilling for gas in the Catskill region. Costs of fuel, coupled with the drastic downturn in the economy has many property owners wondering how they will obtain the energy needed for their homes, being primary or secondary. Many initiatives are taking place. Grass pellets are being produced which could be a fuel of the future in the mountains. Wind turbines have created controversy. When a small windmill is made affordable to the homeowner no doubt this will be utilized. All the waterpower once used by the early settlers is again being looked at. Small-scale turbines which would be placed in streams may someday serve our needs.

Self-sufficiency for all homeowners would be a dream. CLA will notify its members when promising alternatives become available. ☛

Gas Drilling

CLA Opposes Overreaching Legislation

By Patricia Odell

The Catskill Landowners Association is concerned about the growing number of city and state regulators and politicians calling for bans or moratoriums on drilling near New York City's watershed expressing concerns that toxic chemicals used in the drilling process would pollute the city's water supply.

State Assemblyman James Brennan (D-44th District) plans to reintroduce legislation next year that would permanently prohibit drilling for gas or oil in the watershed to protect water and air quality. That includes parts of eight counties including Delaware, Greene, Schoharie, Sullivan and Ulster. The bill would also halt the issuance of any permits for well drilling in the state until a complete environmental review is done by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Also, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection has written a letter to the state requesting a one-mile drilling buffer around all reservoirs.

"Clean, potable water is of utmost concern," Mr. Brennan said in a statement. "We cannot take a chance with the source of safe drinking water for over 9 million people who depend on it daily in New York City. We must be sure that the New York City watershed area, as well as the aquifers that our upstate residents depend upon, are protected from any possible contamination. My bill will identify the protections that need to be taken to prevent the need for clean-up later."

In light of these, and similar developments, CLA has sent the following letter dated Oct. 13, to New York Governor David A. Patterson, Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Pete Grannis and the Commissioner's Office at the NYC Department of Environmental Protection.

The Catskill Landowners Association (CLA) respectfully opposes any restriction of natural gas drilling in the Catskills without full compensation to landowners who may have otherwise profited from drilling. We define "restriction" as excessively cumbersome regulations or an outright ban.

CLA represents many private landowners in the Catskill region, including Sullivan, Delaware, Ulster, and Greene Counties, who collectively own thousands of acres of largely undeveloped land.

Some landowners in the Catskills are considering or already have signed leases with gas exploration companies for drilling in the underlying Marcellus shale formation, which runs throughout most of the Catskill region.

It has been shown these contracts can be carried out in an environmentally sound manner, can prove to be profitable for both parties, and can provide badly needed financial influxes for regions slated for drilling as well as the national economy.

Our mission, since CLA's founding in 1993, is to resist unnecessary regulations that compromise landowner rights if these landowners manage their properties in accordance with sound environmental practices.

We believe excessive regulations or an unlimited ban on gas drilling will violate these rights and equitable compensation to landowners must be provided. We are interested in meeting with you to discuss ways this important issue can be addressed.

CLA president John Wadlin signed the letter.

As of this publication, CLA had not yet heard back from the Governor's office, DEP or DEC regarding its letter.

In a related development, the Catskill Watershed Corporation, has put together a package of information related to natural gas drilling that is available without charge by contacting Diane Galusha, Communications Director and Education Coordinator, by phone at 845-586-1400 or e-mail at galusha@cwconline.org. CLA is working with the Catskill Watershed Corporation on further analyses of oil and gas leases, studying both the positive and negative aspects for landowners.

The following are a number of sources referred to in the package that can be useful for landowners interested in learning more about the issue. (These documents can also be found at www.cwconline.org/news/gasinfo.html.)

- Cornell University Cooperative Extension: Gas Exploration and Leasing on Private Land: Tips and Guidance for New York Landowners
- The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation—Division of Mineral Resources, which regulates gas drilling in New York State.
- Delaware River Basin Commission: Natural Gas Drilling in the Marcellus Shale Formation
- New York State Office of Real Property Services: Method of valuing oil and gas producing properties for real property tax purposes. ♦

Annual Meeting Notes

CLA had a lively turnout at its annual meeting on July 26, hosted by the Tuscarora Club.

The keynote speaker was Willie Janeway, the regional director of New York State's Department of Environmental Conserva-

tion's Region 3 Office. He emphasized that private land stewardship is very important to the DEC in its efforts to protect the entire landscape and natural resources. He said CLA represents an important partner in this endeavor. He gave a summary of DEC's activities including:

- the release of a revised draft of the Catskill Park State Land Master Plan
- budgeting \$1 million for The Interpretive Center
- working with the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development for the development of a scenic byway along the Route 28 corridor
- broadening the numbers of invasive species
- working with the Federal Government to address flooding in the Catskills
- looking into responsible extraction of natural resources, particularly related to concerns about water contamination when drilling for gas
- the agency's involvement in 20 different programs through six major departments studying such areas as climate change, energy conservation, green and healthy communities and stewardship of land, among other issues. ♦

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