

Immediate Release

April 10, 2014

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Wetzel County Impacted by Shale Drilling Boom, but Still Has High Unemployment

Case Studies Compare Impacts Across Multi-State Region

[Charleston, WV] – The boom in Marcellus Shale gas drilling is having a wide-ranging impact, especially across West Virginia and into Ohio and Pennsylvania. An in-depth look at four counties, two in Pennsylvania and one each in Ohio and West Virginia, shines a light on what an increase in gas drilling means for local communities.

The Multi-State Shale Research Collaborative, of which the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy is a member, released case studies today examining the impacts of shale oil and gas drilling on four active drilling communities — Carroll County, Ohio; Greene & Tioga counties, Pa.; and Wetzel County, W.Va.

The case studies, informed by the latest data and local interviews, examine how shale drilling is playing a role in local economic development, housing, traffic and infrastructure, education, emergency services, and several other areas.

"The natural gas industry has brought changes, both good and bad to Wetzel County, but an even more interesting story is what hasn't changed. As more unconventional drilling occurs, communities like Wetzel County will need to be proactive to get the most out of the developing industry," said Sean O’Leary, Fiscal Policy Analyst with the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy.

The Collaborative anticipates its findings will be used by community leaders to help them prepare for the impacts of future gas drilling in their area.

While the impacts of gas drilling in Wetzel County have been less than in Ohio and Pennsylvania, the community was still caught off-guard as the boom hit. Traffic and road damage have emerged as the primary concerns from a taskforce created by county leaders. The group continues to meet regularly and is likely key to why the community has weathered the changes better than others.

The promise of more jobs in this already hard-hit area, however, has fallen flat. Wetzel County still suffers from double-digit unemployment despite having some of the highest natural gas production in the region.

"In Wetzel County the Marcellus shale boom has brought some growth but less development," said Ted Boettner, Executive Director of the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy. "This highlights why it is so important for communities to enact policies that ensure that they are better off, not worse off, after the drilling subsides."

The case studies are available online at <http://multistateshale.org>.

ABOUT THIS PROJECT: The Multi-State Shale Research Collaborative is conducting in-depth research and interviews to produce trend analyses, policy recommendations, and other resources on the impacts of drilling in the Marcellus and Utica Shale.

Member organizations include the Fiscal Policy Institute of New York, Policy Matters Ohio, Keystone Research Center/Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center, Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis in Virginia, and West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy.