

## **OCCA informs county municipalities about gas drilling options**

The Otsego County Conservation Association has sent an informational packet to all 34 municipalities in Otsego County about their options regarding gas drilling. One component of the packet is an article from the OCCA newsletter, "The Lookout," reporting on the proceedings of a conference held in Morrisville in June – "A Proactive Response to Natural Gas Development in Upstate New York." The mailing also includes two opinion pieces issued by OCCA and which appeared in "The (Oneonta) Daily Star" – one on OCCA's concerns about the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's ability to oversee gas drilling operations effectively and another advocating a production (or severance) tax on gas companies to defray costs incurred by the state as a result of gas drilling operations and oversight.

OCCA has also offered to provide compact disc copies of both the June conference and public information meeting presided over by Jim Goldstein, supervisor of the Town of Lebanon (Madison County). Public Service Commission officials were present at the meeting to answer questions about gas drilling.

"Our mailing also includes a very informative letter written by Mr. Goldstein," said OCCA executive director Erik Miller. "His letter deals with both the risks and benefits of drilling and the difference between responsible and irresponsible drilling practices."

Miller added that Goldstein is a "gold mine" of information on the topic and believes he would be a good source for local governments to contact with questions or concerns on gas drilling.

"Regulation of roads, evaluation of municipal infrastructure and critical environmental areas, and permits are important ways for towns to have some control over the impacts of gas drilling – which promise to be considerable," Miller said.

Participating in regional planning and establishing escrows, host agreements, and emergency response agreements are other measures towns should consider, he said, adding that OCCA's primary concern in regard to gas drilling is for water quality.

"Towns can pass laws to protect limited resources, such as aquifers," Miller said.

The packet was sent to mayors and supervisors only; however, Miller urged municipal officials and private citizens to contact the OCCA office at 547.4488 or [director@occainfo.org](mailto:director@occainfo.org) if they would like to receive the same information.

"We have compiled a lot of information on this issue and put it on our website," Miller said. The organization's website address is [www.occainfo.org](http://www.occainfo.org).

In June of this year, OCCA issued a position statement on natural gas drilling, asserting, "Gas development cannot be shown to safeguard the intrinsic qualities each and every one of us so cherish here in our immediate environment. Horizontal gas drilling within Otsego County and New York State poses serious concerns regarding its effects on water, ambient noise and air quality. Regulatory authorities, such as the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation in its scope for gas drilling as proposed in its Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement (SGEIS), have yet to address adequately the protection of water, air and other environmental factors."

OCCA is a non-profit environmental organization, established in 1968. Its activities and programs include major water quality initiatives, volunteer recruitment for Household Hazardous Waste Collection

Day, Cooperstown container recycling, publication of "Otsego Walks & Paddles," stewardship of Basswood State Forest, and organization of nature walks for the public. OCCA has been an active member of the Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway Committee and is working with many municipalities to promote sound land-use planning. For more information on OCCA, or to donate, call (607) 547-4488 or visit the website.