

Published: March 16, 2009 05:17 pm, The Daily Star

OCCA revises gas-lease map

COOPERSTOWN _ The Otsego County Conservation Association has revised its earlier map showing parcels with natural gas leases and public land in Otsego County.

Created from data available at the Otsego County Real Property Tax Office, the new map shows additional properties whose owners have signed leases for natural gas drilling with gas and oil companies working in the area.

Since the beginning of the year, an additional 204 parcels have been signed, totaling 12,190 acres. Parcels now under lease contract number 839, with total acreage rising to 54,443 acres. This activity brings the total percentage of Otsego County acreage leased to 8.7 per cent.

"The startling thing about this map is that we're looking at nearly 10 percent of our land holdings in this county being signed up for leasing. And due to a policy known as compulsory integration, this actually represents an even greater number of acres," said Erik Miller, OCCA executive director, in a news release.

"The map shows the impact visually of gas leasing on a community. We produced it as a tool for local governments to be able to really see what's going on in their territory and to consider drafting land use regulations or modify existing ones to address concerns," he said.

"OCCA is concerned about so much land in our county being under lease for horizontal drilling rights because, as things now stand, there is nothing in the law _ either local, county or state _ that makes us think horizontal drilling is an environmentally safe practice," said Martha Clarvoe, OCCA president.

OCCA member Bennett Sandler compiled the map using GIS software. Information was provided to him by Clarvoe and OCCA member Paul Mendelsohn, working from lease data available from the county tax office.

The map may be viewed on the OCCA website, www.occainfo.org.