

Maryland-Delaware-D.C. Water Science Center
Seminar Series



Wednesday, September 11, 2013 11:00-12:00

How is Maryland approaching the hydraulic fracturing controversy?

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The Devonian Marcellus Shale contains a vast reserve of natural gas. While only about 1% of the total “Marcellus play” underlies Garrett and Allegany Counties in western Maryland, the estimated value of that gas is tens of billions of dollars or more. Western Maryland has decades of experience with conventional natural gas development from the Oriskany Sandstone, but getting gas out of the tight Marcellus Shale requires the “non-conventional” method, high volume hydraulic fracturing (HVHF). The question of whether to allow HVHF is being debated vigorously in Maryland, New York, and many other places. With no HVHF activity to date, Maryland has the luxury of learning from its neighbors.

The Departments of the Environment and of Natural Resources, with the advice of an advisory commission established by a Governor’s Executive Order, have been studying whether to allow HVHF. This talk is a review of the basic geology of the Marcellus in western Maryland, recent research results on the consequences of HVHF, and the work of the advisory commission as it assists the departments in making final recommendations to the Governor and the state legislature.



Source: U.S. Geological Survey, New York

David A. Vanko, a geology professor for the last thirty years, is Dean of the Jess and Mildred Fisher College of Science and Mathematics at Towson University. He chairs the Governor’s Marcellus Shale Safe Drilling Initiative Advisory Commission.

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