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Webinar to explore court decision on Marcellus gas development



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Penn State Extension will host a Web-based seminar on Aug. 9 exploring the ramifications of the recent court decision that struck down part of the state's recently passed law governing Marcellus Shale natural-gas development.

Titled "A Blow to Act 13?: The Impact of the Commonwealth Court's Decision on Local Zoning and Natural Gas Development in Pennsylvania," the one-hour webinar will begin at 1 p.m. Free and open to the public, the session will be of special interest to municipal officials and attorneys.

Attorney Steve Saunders with Saunders Law LLC in Scranton will provide an expert's view of traditional zoning in Pennsylvania and oil and gas development before and after Act 13. He will cover the legal arguments presented to the Commonwealth Court and explain the court's rationale for its decision.

Saunders also will examine possible outcomes resulting from the court ruling and advise how local governments might react, according to David Messersmith, extension educator based in Wayne County, who will moderate the online discussion.

"Our main goal for the webinar is to clear up any misconceptions that people have about the court decision and to help them understand what their future course of action might be regarding Marcellus gas development," he said. "We want to clarify what the court decision really means."

Because the Commonwealth Court ruling was appealed by Gov. Tom Corbett's administration to the state Supreme Court in late July, municipal officials and others face considerable uncertainty about its immediate impact on natural-gas development, Messersmith said. He noted that Saunders will address possible outcomes from the appeal.

"There are a lot of people who are interested in natural-gas development, and the Marcellus play impacts such a wide segment of the population -- from business owners to local government officials to citizen stakeholders -- so we believe that this program will be of interest to many," he said.

The webinar can be viewed at <https://meeting.psu.edu/pscems/>. No registration is necessary. For more information, contact Carol Loveland at 570-320-4429 or by email at cal24@psu.edu.

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