

Wayne Township Landfill Sees Impact from Gas Industry

This column is presented weekly by the Public Education sub-committee of the Clinton County Natural Gas Task Force in an effort to provide accurate, up-to-date information on activities surrounding the Marcellus Shale formation and the natural gas exploration industry.

January 20, 2011 - By JAY ALEXANDER

With the arrival of a new year, many people like to sit back and think about the previous year; what we accomplished, what we didn't, what we did that made a difference and what we could have done to make a difference. A look at the priorities for the coming year is also in order. As general manager of the Clinton County Solid Waste Authority, which owns and operates the Wayne Township Landfill (WTL), quite a few thoughts run through my mind in regard to 2010 and 2011, not the least of which is the impact of the natural gas industry on the landfill.

The gas exploration boom in central Pennsylvania has impacted our landfill in a big way and on many fronts. In fact, the landfill has seen unprecedented growth due to the industry.

First, there are new waste streams being generated by this industry, all of which can be disposed of or recycled at the landfill. Such wastes include, drill cuttings which is waste material coming up out of the hole as they drill, some has petroleum products and synthetics mixed with it (making it similar to contaminated soil), general plant trash, trash from the employees on a well site, frac sands, dirty mud, trees, brush and stumps from the right of ways or locations, etc.

With proper testing up front, permitting of each location and a manifest for each and every load that comes into the Wayne Township Landfill facility, we can manage and properly dispose of this material in a safe and environmentally responsible way. As for the drill cuttings, we disposed of in excess of 166,000 tons of drill cuttings in 2010. There are 47 landfills in the state, about half are taking this waste material and have bigger volumes than WTL.

There were some early concerns in regard to radiation levels generated by the drill cuttings. The landfill has a state-certified radiation monitor, designed to detect even the slightest levels of radiation in any incoming waste. To date, we have not set off our radiation monitor at the facility once with drill cuttings. We have been conducting internal sampling and testing to educate ourselves on the characteristics of this material, well beyond the current regulations, as well as researching how this new business will move the landfill forward and what impacts it may have on the community.

When you hear the phrase, "they (gas industry) should be paying taxes," in the news headlines, people need to understand that's already happening. For every ton of waste coming into our facility from the gas industry, the landfill collects \$10.25 and passes those monies on to various governmental entities.

Here is a breakdown for 2010 of the fees/taxes paid to the Wayne Township Landfill by the gas industry and which entities were the recipients of this fee/tax:

- Pa. DEP Growing Greener Fund, \$4.25 per ton for \$705,000
- Pa. DEP Recycling Fund, \$2 per ton for \$332,000
- Clinton County Host County Fee, \$3 per ton for up to 750 tons per day and \$3.15 per ton over 750 tons per day for \$510,000
- Wayne Twp. Host Community Fee, \$1.25 per ton for up to 750 tons per day and \$1.40 per ton over 750 ton per day for \$215,000.

These are all fees/taxes directly from the gas industry and are new and above normal income streams to all that are mentioned. It is important to see that this industry is already paying substantial fees/taxes under the existing policies.

We recycle the stumps, brush and clean wood waste at the landfill's wood waste processing facility. This material is converted into sawdust used for stabilizing the drill cuttings on location for disposal at our facility or mulch for sediment control in silt socks or landscaping. This has been a substantial new income stream for WTL in 2010 and we look forward to expanding it into the future. In addition, the landfill's recycling department was expanded to include the sale of sawdust.

The biggest overall impact to the landfill is that the increase of new business from the gas industry has allowed us to move up our expansion plans. In October 2010, we received a planned expansion permit to redevelop our closed section of landfill. This was a four-year process and the end result will be the recycling the old closed 60-acre landfill and turning it into a new 75-acre landfill, adding 20-plus years of capacity to the life our facility.

We have been able to add new jobs, purchase and/or update equipment and purchase some neighboring properties that have long term potential for supporting the landfill operations. In all, seven new employees were added last year in order to adapt to the needs of the Marcellus Shale industry in our area and in support of the workload associated with our expansion plans.

One area we researched but decided against getting into at the landfill was a facility to treat frac water - the water used in the natural gas well drilling process. Our site has all the necessary pieces to make a very well situated frac water treatment facility. However, we explored all of the options and after months of research we have pulled the plug on plans to construct a treatment plant at the landfill. Several issues kept coming up that led us to decide on moving away from that service. The main reason is that technology is advancing so fast that it is hard to pin down one process as the "best process" and we did not feel it would fit with our mission in the end.

As we start 2011, the team at the landfill will continue to look for opportunities to keep both our business and our community strong, including opportunities within the natural gas industry. And we will continue to challenge ourselves to do better and try to find a way to advance the solid waste industry without having any risk to our community or the environment.

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