The Marcellus Shale

- Found throughout the Allegheny Plateau region of the northern Appalachian Basin
- In Maryland, it is found in Garrett County and part of Allegany County
- Recovering gas from the Marcellus became economically feasible
  - Advances in horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing
  - Higher wellhead prices for gas, but prices have fallen

Drilling Activity in Maryland

- Gas drilling in Maryland is not a new activity
- Several hundred producing wells were drilled in Western Maryland in the 1950’s and 60’s (yellow)
- 7 Gas production wells are currently permitted
- Approximately 90 permitted sites are being used for gas storage (orange)

Typical Well

http://exploreshale.org/
Gov. O’Malley’s Executive Order

- Issued June 2011
- Directs MDE and DNR, in consultation with Advisory Commission, to conduct a study and issue reports on:
  - the short-term, long-term and cumulative effects of natural gas exploration in the Marcellus Shale
  - Best Practices
  - Appropriate changes, if any, to the laws and regulations concerning oil and gas
- Whether and how gas development can be accomplished without unacceptable risks

Issues of Concern

- Contamination of drinking water supplies by migrating gas and fracturing fluid
- Damage to aquatic living resources
- Fragmentation of forest and habitat
- Spills, leaks or improper disposal of fuel, fracturing fluids, flowback, cuttings
- Air pollution
- Impact on traffic, roads and bridges
- Community impacts
Reducing the Risks

- Comprehensive Gas Development Plan
- Strong regulations
  - Air emissions controls
  - Cement and casing standards
  - Containment and SPCC Plan
  - Setbacks to protect people and sensitive areas
- Robust inspection and enforcement
- Surface Owners Protection Act

Current Focus

- Best Practices report
  - Public comment period on draft closed September 10, 2013
  - Response to comments and final report this month
- Economic Report (RESI)
- Public Health Report (MIAEH)
- Wrapping up other issues, such as traffic and emergency response
- Final Report likely in the Fall of 2014
  - Will integrate the results of work since June 2011
  - Make findings and recommendations

A WV Home and Well Site

Drilling Site in West Virginia

Hydrofracturing Site

Completed Well Site, PA