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Venango Conservation District Host CFA Act 13 Well Plugging Media Day

The Venango Conservation District hosted a media day to recognize Commonwealth Financing Authority Act 13 Well Plugging grants received by Venango and Clarion conservation Districts. The Venango conservation District received a grant for \$245,000.00 to plug 11 wells on Oil Creek State Park and Clarion County Conservation District was awarded \$220,000.00 to plug 8 wells on private land in Clarion County. This event was also held to recognize all the partners that are involved in the process of plugging wells.

Present at the media Day was Scott Perry the Deputy Secretary of the Office of Oil and Gas Management for the Department of



Environmental Protection. Trudy Alexander District Manager for the Clarion County Conservation District, John Kolojechick Chairman from the Venango Senior Environment Corps., Lance Bowes District Manager of the Venango Conservation District, Representative R. Lee James and Senator Scott Hutchinson.

Scott Perry of the DEP stated the importance of conducting this well plugging work. According to Perry wells in Oil Creek State Park pose a serious threat to hikers, hunters and other users of the park with the potential of falling into one of these openings and risking injury. While wells that are being plugged on private land in Clarion County have the potential to leak methane gas into homes. There is also the possibility that these wells may be leaking oil or other contaminants into ground water of surface waterways

causing pollution. Perry also said that there are as many as 200,000 orphaned and abandoned wells across the Commonwealth and DEP has only been able to plug 4,000 since 1989. DEP was only able to plug four wells last year across the whole state and Perry believes continued grant funding will allow those numbers to rise.

Other organizations that are instrumental in successfully completing a project of this nature is the Venango Senior Corps. These volunteers are responsible for locating and documenting these orphaned and abandoned wells in Oil Creek State Park and on other public lands within Venango County. They have been working collaboratively with DEP and DCNR's Oil Creek State Park since 2004. To date they are responsible for locating 855 wells on Oil Creek State Park alone and 174 wells on state game lands in Venango County as well as an additional three wells on state forest land. Without their efforts much of the plugging work couldn't be completed.

State Representative R. Lee James and Senator Scott Hutchinson were both on hand as well to speak to the need of additional funding for well plugging efforts. Senator Hutchinson stated that he would continue to promote the dedication of more funding



through both the Commonwealth Financing Authority and other initiatives through the DEP and other organizations. While Representative James applauded the work being done by the volunteers of the Senior environment corps. and expressed the need to continue to support these volunteers in their efforts.

Agencies that were not represented at this event should be mentioned as well are from the Department of

Conservation and Natural Resources Parks & Recreation, Oil Creek State Park and the Department of Community and Economic Development's Commonwealth Financing Authority.

DCNR is responsible for overseeing plugging operations on the park to make sure that plugging operations are meeting conservation standards and not causing harm to the ecosystem and environment. While DCED is the agency that oversees the Commonwealth Financing Authority that administers the Act 13 Marcellus Legacy Fund. This is the agency responsible for providing the funding for this necessary work.

