

Launching a Cornell Examination of the Marcellus System

The issues related to the development of the Marcellus Shale unconventional gas resource are emblematic of a whole family of extremely complicated Energy-Environment-Economy situations that we will confront in the next 50 years. Even while the need for a new means to supply energy to the world's population has been talked about widely for the last 5 years, the magnitude of the changes needed has remained abstract. We suggest "the Marcellus situation" will play out over and over again in the immediate future, whether related to wind farms, nuclear power plants, geothermal energy, rebuilding an energy distribution infrastructure, reorganizing communities and transportation systems, or to the use of water for certain bio- or solar-power technologies. None of these energy technologies solutions, in themselves designed to reduce global environmental risk (GHG emissions) will cleanly disappear into a tiny spot. They will unfold in someone's back yard, and they will demand a change in land use or water use.

The development plans for the Marcellus Shale are unfolding immediately in our backyards and require that the Cornell community be educated about the Environmental consequences, the Energy options and the Economics of different ways of developing the Marcellus Shale and the economics of not developing the Marcellus Shale. We suggest that CCSF, with its Energy, Environment and Economic expertise, is positioned to be an honest broker in community discussions about these complex Energy-Environment-Economy tradeoffs.

We propose that a CCSF Topical Lunch be organized to plan a much broader, more inclusive, and fast-moving campus-wide examination of the issues.