

Focused Technology Workshop Report
“Coal Bed Natural Gas”
October 29, 2003; Stonewall Resort, Roanoke, WV

Assessment of the Workshop

. I spent nearly six months planning this workshop as part of a larger workshop series on energy and the future of energy in West Virginia. I did so in cooperation with the West Virginia Development Office - Energy Efficiency Office and West Virginia University.

The Governor of West Virginia appointed an Energy Task Force during his first year in office and charged it with writing an energy plan. One of the recommendations in the plan was to develop and host a series of workshops on different energy issues. Because of my involvement with PTTC, I was asked to sit on the Steering Committee to organize all four workshops in the series, and to chair the Planning Committee for the Coal Bed Natural Gas Workshop. I agreed to do so only if PTTC would be recognized as a full partner and receive due credit.

The workshop was a big success. Our primary goals were to identify the issues with coal bed natural gas (CBNG) that are perceived as impediments to the development of this resource in West Virginia, and the steps that the State of West Virginia can take to remove these perceived road blocks to CBNG development. We proposed to do this by bringing together a diverse group of gas producers, coal companies, land companies, state regulatory officials, lawyers and individual land owners with the intent that they could all learn from one another, especially the problems that were unique to each group.

Attendees were challenged at the very beginning of the workshop to be actively involved in the three small discussion groups that were scheduled. In return, they were given a promise that all of their voices would be heard, a report would be written and something would be done. When they left that day, the workshop would be over, but the process that began that day would continue, with the intent that this process would lead to an acceleration of the development of the coal bed natural gas resource in West Virginia.

We had invited a few keynote speakers to get the thought processes working, and we had invited other key individuals to serve on three different panels prior to each of the breakout group sessions. Originally we had planned on breaking into two or three breakout groups, but once the pre-registration topped 75, we decided to pre-assign registrants to round tables, each seating 10, to assure diversity, with each table serving as a small discussion group. To facilitate discussion at each table, we recruited and trained table leaders and provided each with a check list of key discussion issues for each of the three breakout session topics.

After each breakout session, I worked my way through the room with a wireless microphone and gave each table leader the opportunity to give a report while referring to comments recorded on flip charts. These flip charts were documented as to table leader and session and retained to assist in the writing of the workshop report. More than 670 individual

comments, recommendations and suggestions were recorded on the flip charts from the 17 tables for the three sessions.

Compiling these comments in a meaningful form was such a daunting task that the workshop Planning Committee failed to act in a timely manner. Finally, I accepted the challenge and organized the comments by themes and eventually was able to make some sense out of everything that we had received.

In the end, participants seemed to feel that there are at least six main issues that need to be addressed. First and foremost, the issue of who owns the gas in coal beds needs to be resolved. Once the issue is settled, either in the courts or in the legislature, then the various players can learn to play within the rules and develop the resource. Second, once the ownership issue has been settled, then the State should develop a set of realistic, consistent and fair Rules and Regulations, and place the regulation of coal bed natural gas drilling, completion and production under one State regulatory agency. Third, participants thought the State should investigate providing incentives, mainly tax incentives, that could accelerate the development of the resource and make it economic to do so. More comments were received on this issue than for anything else, except the ownership issue.

Participants also seemed to be in favor of more and better data on which to base decisions and to be used for research. So, a fourth recommendation was that the State should set up one clearing house for coal bed natural gas data. It further was suggested that the logical organization in which to set up this clearing house was the State Geological Survey, which already maintains coal and oil and gas data bases. This led to the fifth recommendation, which was that the State should invest in a Government/Industry/Academic Coal Bed Natural Gas Research Consortium. This consortium should be charged with developing a research plan for coal bed natural gas drilling, completion, production, water use and disposal, compression and transmission, and developing the necessary infrastructure. Infrastructure was perceived to be a big enough problem that the final recommendation was that the State should encourage and promote the development of the infrastructure necessary to bring coal bed natural gas to the market place.

Attendee List

Nearly 150 persons pre-registered, and although nearly 20 did not attend, another 20 registered at the door, for a final head count of 156. A final attendance list is attached. This list originally was a pre-registration list, but no-shows have been noted, and walk-ins added at the end of the list.

Evaluation Forms

I had the opportunity to develop an evaluation form for all four workshops in the series through my role on the Steering Committee. The response at the CBNG workshop was good, with more than 100 forms being filled out and returned. "Scores" were tabulated and all

comments were documented, and then a summary report on how participants evaluated the workshop was prepared. This summary also is attached.

Of those who responded, nearly 80% agreed or strongly agreed that the presentations by our keynote speakers were very helpful in giving them a better understanding of the issues that were to be discussed throughout the workshop. However, only 60% felt that we had given them enough time to make their presentations and to answer questions from the group. Seventy five percent (75%) of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the breakout sessions were effective in generating discussion, ideas and recommendations, and essentially this same percentage of respondents believed that the table leaders had accurately reported their discussion to the entire group. Nearly 90% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt welcome to express their ideas and opinions during these sessions, and 65% agreed or strongly agreed with the ideas, opinions and suggestions made by their group as a whole.

We asked one final question: "In my opinion, the most important three to six topics or ideas generated in the breakout sessions were:". Approximately 70 answers were received for this question; all were recorded in the summary of evaluation forms. As expected, more than one third of the 70 responses were related to the question of coal bed natural gas ownership. Tax and other incentives ranked second to the ownership issue.

A set of evaluation sheets can be submitted on request. Also, we could supply, on request, the folder given to each registrant and a copy of the workshop report that was prepared for the State Development Office - Energy Efficiency Office.