

Mark W. Smith, Chairman
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Bradford County Commissioners Office

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For Immediate Release

As Chairman of the Bradford County Commissioners I will be sending each one of our state legislators an invitation to attend a special meeting with Clean and Green landowners on Wednesday January 21, 2009 at 10:00 A.M. at the Towanda American Legion. The purpose of this meeting is to give the public the opportunity to relay their concerns to our state legislators in regards to the state law, Act 319, known as Clean and Green.

As commissioners we have all struggled with implementing the state regulations that require those enrolled in the Clean and Green program to pay the rollback tax penalty if a gas well is placed on the property. We understand that some landowners in the Clean and Green do not have a clause in their lease obligating the gas company to pay the rollback.

These rollback penalties can be a significant financial hardship to landowners especially on very large parcels of land, some as much as \$40,000 to \$50,000. This is even more of an issue for cases in which royalties' for landowner's gas production may not be realized for years.

In working on this issue over the past few months I have personally talked to many state agencies including the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, County Commissioners Association, Department of Agriculture and the president of the Pennsylvania Assessors Association. I have also personally asked for the assistance of our state representatives.

Furthermore, in October of 2008 we, as a Board of Commissioners, sent an official letter signed by all three commissioners to all of our state legislators. In that letter we stated "We as the Bradford County Commissioners are very concerned about this issue" we explained in our letter that "In following the state law Act 319 some citizens in Clean and Green will be required to pay a large sum of money for violating Clean and Green status. Although many landowners have signed leases that incorporate the fact that gas companies are responsible for the payment of the rollback many landowners have signed leases some time ago when they did they did not realize a rollback penalty would be assessed." In closing we stated "...we are requesting your legislative assistance and leadership in this matter."

As Chairman of our County Commissioners I am frustrated and tired of having to say the state needs to change the law. It is time our representatives take the action and the responsibility to address the issue. Many Clean and Green landowners have voiced sincere concern over this issue and in speaking with many of them before and after our last public meeting I have decided that I must publicly demand action from our state representatives.

This meeting will be held in hopes of gaining clear and decisive direction from our duly elected state legislators on what is a state law that the county is mandated to follow. I am seeking public and written direction from our state legislators regarding the implementation of Clean and Green in regards to payment extensions, mineral and surface right issues and the other legal issues regarding the program.