

## Hundreds turn out to oppose wastewater facility



By JASON COX | THE LEADER

A capacity crowd fills the Pulteney Fire Hall as Paul Wilson of Heron Hill Winery reads a letter from owner John Ingle. Wilson, along with seven others on a panel, spoke Sunday afternoon on the topic of deep well disposal of concentrated brine laced with unspecified chemical in an abandoned gas well in Pulteney.

By Bob Recotta

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Pulteney, N.Y. -

The estimated population of Pulteney is about 1,300.

At times Sunday it looked like every one of them was crowded into the Pulteney Fire Hall to discuss the proposed plan to deposit contaminated wastewater in a former natural gas well.

More than 300 people came to hear a panel discuss the plan. Chesapeake Energy approached Pulteney officials last fall about the plan to dump the wastewater, which is generated from the hydrofracking process, into a well about a mile west of Keuka Lake.

Around the same time, Chesapeake submitted a permit application to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to convert the old well into a disposal well.

Injection wells are a method used by gas drilling companies to dispose of the wastewater created by high-volume, horizontal hydraulic fracturing – or “fracking” – which is a process used to tap the gas-rich Marcellus Shale formation.

There is a shortage of treatment plants able to handle the waste in the Northeast, and injection wells provide “the most cost effective and environmentally sound option” for disposing of the wastewater, Chesapeake wrote in its EPA application.

The panel included U.S. Rep. Eric Massa, D-Corning, Tony Ingraffea, professor of engineering, Cornell University, **Walter Hang, president of Toxics Targeting**, Art Hunt, owner of Hunt

Country Vineyards, Richard Young, professor of geology at SUNY Geneseo, activist Steve Coffman and attorney and environmentalist Rachel Treichler.

All those on the panel were against Chesapeake's plan to pump wastewater into the former well.

When Massa asked the crowd how many were also against it, the vast majority of the audience raised their hand.

Ingraffea warned that Chesapeake's plan would mean approximately 180,000 gallons of wastewater would be pumped into the well daily for 10 years.

The wastewater, which is a highly concentrated brine that critics say contains toxic materials such as benzene and radioactive material from the hydraulic fracturing process, would be hauled in tanker trucks.

Ingraffea said it would mean three trucks an hour eight hours a day would be traveling to and from the site. He said that would put a serious strain on the roads leading to the old well.

He said the high level of truck traffic also increases the chances of an accident or spill.

Hang said it was the responsibility of those living near the well to stop Chesapeake's plan.

"I have very bad news for you," Hang said. "They are going to drill in the Marcellus formation as soon as they can. There's only one way that's not going to happen. If you stop it. I'm going to teach you how to kill the project."

Hang said the Pulteney town board could pass a resolution asking Chesapeake to rescind its proposal.

This could present a challenge, since three of the five town board members lease the mineral rights to their land to Chesapeake.

Hang also said Pulteney residents should fight to gain lead agency status. Currently the State Department of Environmental Conservation is the lead agency on Chesapeake's permit request.

"You should control the process, not the Department of Environmental Conservation," Hang said. He also recommended opponents begin fundraising to hire an attorney.

"You can nip this in the bud if you organize and act immediately," Hang said.

Massa told those assembled he would fight for them in Washington, D.C.

"If you make this decision, in a generation, or two, or three you find out the entire area of Western New York has been turned into a large Love Canal, the people responsible will be gone," Massa said. "What will you say to each other?"

Massa said Pulteney residents should not be fooled by lease agreements offered by Chesapeake.

"After you can't live in your house or sell your house because you don't have access to fresh water, the pennies you got will seem like silver to Judas," Massa said.