



West Virginia Surface Owner's Rights Organization
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For Immediate Release

November 27, 2007

**Landowners' group to meet in Weston;
Focus is on protecting landowners from abuses by oil & gas drillers**

West Virginia landowners now have a new organization focused on protecting them from abuses by oil & gas drillers – the WV Surface Owner's Rights Organization (WV-SORO). The group was formed this summer by several state landowners and public interest lawyer Dave McMahon. "Drilling permits in WV have skyrocketed from 900 per year to over 3,000 so we're hearing from lots of furious landowners who believe they've been run over," commented McMahon. "Recent court rulings on royalty shortages to mineral owners indicate that both groups are being abused by operators."

"When it comes to protecting your property rights against the abuses of the oil & gas drillers, the playing field is tilted about as far as it can go in favor of the drillers," noted Gary Zuckett, an organizer for the group and Executive Director of WV Citizen Action. "As it now stands, landowners get a notice in the mail only 15 days before a permit to drill is approved on their property. The landowner can then send in comments to the WV Office of Oil & Gas. What the notice doesn't say is that under current law there is very little the state can do to make changes in the locations of roads, well sites and gas lines," Zuckett added, "These are some of the problems that WV-SORO wants to tackle."

Since its formation this summer, WV-SORO now lists members from 44 of West Virginia's counties and members residing in 16 other states who are still caring for their home places. "We'll be calling on our members from all over to come to Charleston during the legislative session to tell their stories, make sure their lawmakers are informed of the seriousness of this problem, and get them to fix it," said Zuckett. WV-SORO's goal is to get state lawmakers to pass a "Surface Owners' Bill of Rights" to help give landowners more say in the location of wells and access roads and other matters dealing with oil & gas exploration on private property.

The organization will be holding a regional membership and information meeting in Weston on December 13 from 6:30pm to 8:00pm at the Lewis County Senior Citizen Center. The meeting will include a question and answer session on surface owners' rights led by McMahon and a discussion of legislative options for expanding surface owners' rights in West Virginia. Area landowners are encouraged to attend to share their concerns and provide input on what they think needs to be done to protect property owners from industry abuses. State legislators from Lewis and surrounding counties will be invited to attend.

- Who:** WV Surface Owners' Rights Organization (WV-SORO)
- What:** A regional and information meeting to discuss surface owners' rights and what needs to be done to protect property owners from abuses by oil & gas drillers.
- When:** Thursday December 13, 2007 at 6:30pm
- Where:** Lewis County Senior Citizen Center, 171 W. 2nd Street, Weston, WV
- Contact:** Gary Zuckett (304)-346-5891 or David McMahon (304)-415-4288

Contact information for local WV-SORO members willing to share their stories is available upon request.

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