

# Ohio Preps for Drilling, Researches Mineral Rights

the Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Ohio officials are cataloging how much state property sits above the Utica shale as they prepare for potential gas and oil drilling in state parks and forests, which were opened to drilling under a law enacted last year.

When lawmakers were debating that idea, officials from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources had said the state owned less than one-third of the mineral rights under state parks, and they didn't know who held the rights for land in some cases.

State workers have spent three months reviewing property records in 16 eastern Ohio counties with the most active shale drilling, stretching from Trumbull County south to Monroe County and west to Muskingum County, The Columbus Dispatch (<http://bit.ly/M6OuYX> [1] ) reported.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources says the research in those counties is almost done.

"This demonstrates the level of work that is necessary in terms of identifying the mineral rights that are owned by the state," spokesman Carlo LoParo said. "Many properties contain hundreds of parcels, all of which had to be researched."

More research is planned in up to 19 other counties with less active shale drilling, with possibilities ranging from Ashtabula County in the northeast corner to Meigs County in southern Ohio.

The industry has flooded the state in search of gas and oil deposits in the Utica and Marcellus shale formations, and Gov. John Kasich and other state leaders are hinging much of Ohio's job growth strategy on the increase in drilling. Environmentalists have expressed concerns about pollution from drilling and the method known as hydraulic fracturing, which blasts millions of gallons of chemically laced water into the earth to fracture shale formations and release oil, natural gas and natural gas liquids such as propane.

Drilling companies with high interest in the Utica shale have offered eastern Ohio landowners more than \$5,000 an acre for mineral-rights leases, the newspaper said.

It's not clear when drilling companies might be offered access to state park properties.

Some companies were briefed about state lands last month but received no schedule, said Brian Hickman, a spokesman for the Ohio Oil and Gas Association.

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