PUBLIC EDUCATION AND FINANCE IN ENERGY DEVELOPMENT REGIONS

A project of RFF’s initiative, The Community Impacts of Shale Gas and Oil Development

Overview
Public education is fundamental to community economic health in both the near and long term. Industrial booms have been shown to impact education as well as career-based decisionmaking and outcomes. This project builds on the existing body of academic literature and explores the relationship between shale oil and gas development and K-12 public education. The goal of this project is to provide real-world analysis for state and local policymakers and public education organizations.

Scope
The project investigates financial and education outcomes across six states that have experienced rapid expansion in the oil and gas sectors over the last decade: Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia.

The research is largely a data-driven statistical analysis that relies on a new data set being collected by experts at RFF. Aggregating a balanced time series of school and economic metrics will allow the research team to conduct robust statistical analyses both across and within states—ultimately providing a first-of-its-kind look at public school outcomes in shale regions. Examples of indicators to be studied span school revenues and expenses, mill levies, test scores, and student–teacher ratios.

Realizing that data analysis alone can miss nuanced parts of any story, RFF’s team will be traveling to shale plays in each of the six states. They will be meeting with teachers, staff, administrators, and school board officials, as well as state and nonprofit staff, in order to incorporate the on-the-ground experience.

This public education research is one of a series of projects currently underway at RFF exploring the benefits and costs of shale gas and oil development in local communities. Academic partners for this study include senior faculty at Pennsylvania State University, Montana State University, and the University of Calgary.

About Resources for the Future (RFF)
RFF is an independent, nonpartisan organization that conducts economic research and analysis to help leaders make better decisions and craft smarter policies about natural resources and the environment. Learn more at www.rff.org.

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