

Throughout its history, Pennsylvania, due to its abundant natural resources, has played a key role in the building of our nation. Whether it was lumber for construction; coal to fire steam engines, steel mills, and power plants; or the “black gold” from Drake’s Well that launched the U.S. oil industry, the Keystone State’s contributions have been vital to America’s progress. But if we’ve learned anything from Pennsylvania’s industrial heritage, it’s this: if we don’t manage wisely, exploiting our natural resources can have unintended consequences, and the prosperity generated can be fleeting.

Against this backdrop comes the state’s natural gas rush, fueled by recent research suggesting that the geological formation known as the Marcellus shale could contain trillions of cubic feet of recoverable natural gas. However, tapping this vast resource—which could supply the United States with enough clean-burning gas to satisfy the nation’s consumption for more than a decade—could have major impacts, both positive and negative, for landowners, communities, forests, and watersheds. In “Pennsylvania’s Natural Gas Rush,” you’ll read about how Penn State Cooperative Extension is leading the way to educate residents and local officials about how to manage the natural gas boom in a way that protects the environment and leads to smart, sustainable economic growth.

Energy issues, such as the need for biofuels to promote energy independence and reduce our carbon footprint, also may be playing a part in a surge of interest in agricultural education and careers among our greatest natural resource, young people. “Retooling” showcases new recruiting strategies and societal trends that are helping make our college’s majors increasingly “cool” in the eyes of prospective students.

Also in this issue, we provide an update on a famous college landmark, the Berkey Creamery, as it passed its second anniversary in a new location, and “Bearing Fruit” highlights a new emphasis on specialty-crop research brought about by the 2008 Farm Bill. You’ll also learn about a Smithsonian exhibit designed with help from a Penn State soil scientist, how good agricultural practices are helping enhance the safety of fresh fruits and vegetables, recent efforts to bring a global perspective to graduate education, and much more.

On a personal note, you already may have heard that my time as dean will come to an end later this year (see *Colleagues*, page 32). It has been my great pleasure to greet you on this page and present the stories that spotlight the incredible depth, diversity, and distinction of the College of Agricultural Sciences. I hope to continue to interact with many of you as I take on a new role in the college.

As always, we welcome your comments about *Penn State Agriculture*. Write to Editor, *Penn State Agriculture*, The Pennsylvania State University, 134 Agricultural Administration Building, University Park, PA 16802, or send e-mail to [psuagscinews@psu.edu](mailto:psuagscinews@psu.edu) or to me at [RSteele@psu.edu](mailto:RSteele@psu.edu). You also can find the magazine on the Web at [aginfo.psu.edu/psa](http://aginfo.psu.edu/psa).



Robert D. Steele

Dean

