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## Industry Leaders Talk Shale and Regional Impact

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By Tate Blanchard **CONNECT**

Leaders of the Shale Industry were in Wheeling, Tuesday, talking about what a huge economic impact a cracker plant would have on the entire region. It's a project that was headed by West Liberty University and Joe Eddy of Eagle Manufacturing.

Industry leaders agree, the impacts of the industry will be unlike anything we have ever seen, "Shale has already been a game changer, in terms of natural gas production, and natural gas liquids production, you're sitting here in the best slice of the marcellus in this area," said Scott Rotruck, Director of Energy for Spilman, Thomas, & Battle.

That is why these industry leaders have been so focused on the Ohio Valley, and with the announcement last year of the proposed ethane cracker plant coming to Belmont County, the impacts will be seen far beyond the shores of the Ohio River and far beyond the next decade, "I think the employment growth, the wealth growth, the activity that we'll see over a multi-decade spectrum is very exciting," said Steve Hedrick, President & C.E.O., Mid-Atlantic Technology, Research and Innovation Center.

The construction of the cracker plant is expected to bring 10,000 jobs to the Ohio Valley. Once the plant is built, several hundred permanent jobs will need to be filled and these experts said they'll be filled by people living right here in our area, unlike what we've seen in terms of natural gas drilling, "Those products will be made locally, we have here in this area, the largest concentration in North America. Fifty percent of North American production is within 500 mile radius here," said Tom Gellrich, Founder, Topline Analytics.

With that production being in this area, it's going to save lots of money in terms of downstream manufacturing, which gives this cracker plant an edge and puts the Ohio Valley back on the map in terms of industry, "That's a huge competitive advantage to what's already is a large industry in the area. It's going to make that industry much more profitable, it's going to make that industry grow, and it's going to help attract new companies in that industry to the area," said John Molinaro, President & CEO, Appalachian Partnership for Economic Growth.

With the over abundance of shale in our area, these industry leaders believe this will be much bigger than steel once was, for the Ohio Valley, "There's enough ethane here in this region to service more than just one cracker," said Scott Rotruck.

Be sure to look for the full series on this panel discussion in March on WTRF.

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