



VIEW*S* & VISIONS

A publication of Bowles Rice LLP

Spring 2018



Bringing Back Manufacturing and Petrochemical Jobs

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Greg Kozera is the Director of Marketing for Shale Crescent USA, a non-profit and non-governmental organization made up of business leaders, regional economic development partners, area Chambers of Commerce and utility, financial and educational organizations working collectively to promote the growth of the U.S. natural gas supply in eastern Ohio, western Pennsylvania, eastern Kentucky and West Virginia.

Kozera is a marketing, leadership and energy expert with over 40 years of experience in the industry. He is the author of four books, including 2012's "Just the Fracks, Ma'am: The Truth About Hydrofracking and the Next Great American Boom," as well as numerous published articles and public presentations.

He is also the President of Learned Leadership LLC and an adjunct professor at Pierpont Community and Technical College. He holds a master's degree in environmental engineering from Marshall University and bachelor's degree in engineering from West Virginia University.

Standing in line at the post office in Elkview this week, I overheard two locals talking about the economy. They both commented how good it was for them personally. A few days later, I overheard a similar conversation at our local pharmacy in Pinch. This is a big deal. Over the last eight years, these are two of the places I would always hear how bad things were. Things have changed for the better.

I'm not an economist. All I can tell you is what I see and hear, and you can draw your own conclusions. One thing I know is that our area has changed for the better economically, and the main reason is energy.

Most people now know that because of the "Shale Revolution," the United States is the leading producer of natural gas in the world. What most people don't know is that almost 100 percent of the growth of the U.S. natural gas supply is here in the Shale Crescent USA. (That is how eastern Ohio, western Pennsylvania, eastern Kentucky and West Virginia have been branded in order to compete with the Gulf Coast.) If the Shale Crescent USA were a country, it would be the third largest natural gas producer in the world. Only the remainder of the United States and Russia have more natural gas.

But we have more than just energy going for us. The combination we have of abundant affordable energy, abundant fresh water, a location close to over half of the nation's markets and a skilled workforce is rare in the world. Only the Gulf Coast regions of Texas and Louisiana can truly compete with us. All of those advantages, however, are meaningless if no one knows we have them.



Shale Crescent USA, a non-profit and non-governmental organization, was formed by a group of business and community leaders to take that message to the world. When the organization attended the World Petrochemical Conference in Houston in March of 2017, we discovered most petrochemical companies knew that the United States now had the cheapest, most abundant natural gas in the world. What they did not know was that most of the growth of natural gas production – and the cheapest natural gas in the country – is in the Shale Crescent USA region. What this means is that



Tokyo, Japan



Emily Tucker (AEP, front left), Greg Kozera (Shale Crescent USA, front center) and Clay Riley (WV Development Office, front right) with JPCA attendees

site selectors were not even considering the Shale Crescent's energy advantage when looking for a petrochemical plant or manufacturing site.

This is starting to change as Shale Crescent USA garners media coverage in places like *Site Selection Magazine*, *The New York Daily News*, *Newsmax*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Gas and Pipeline Journal* and numerous national and regional radio programs. A foreign company we met at the Global Plastics Conference in Chicago is seriously considering bringing a large manufacturing facility to the Shale Crescent USA. We are marketing and selling directly to the decision makers at petrochemical and energy intensive manufacturing companies. They are the ones who need to know how locating in the Shale Crescent USA can positively impact their bottom line.

Recently, Shale Crescent USA was invited to present at the Japanese Petrochemical Association (JPCA) in Tokyo. The reason Shale Crescent USA was invited is because Japanese companies want to learn more about American energy. The goal of our organization is to market our region so that companies will consider it for building new or expanding existing facilities. If a new facility is built anywhere in the Shale Crescent region, everyone benefits on both sides of the river.

So, in January 2018, our organization took off for Tokyo, Japan. We put together a good team, including myself, Emily Tucker, Manager of International Business Development for AEP, and Clay Riley, a Loaned Executive to the West Virginia Development Office. We contacted over 20 companies and organizations in Tokyo, including the U.S. Embassy in Japan, and presented our story on abundant and economic energy in the Shale Crescent USA.

We were fortunate to be the keynote presenter at the JPCA meeting – a “who’s who” of the Japanese petrochemical industry. We had a packed room. The Shale Crescent USA video got their attention. And when I mentioned that almost one third of the USA’s natural gas is coming from the Shale Crescent USA, up from just three percent in 2010, almost everyone immediately started taking notes. They were surprised to learn that the Shale Crescent USA produces more natural gas than Texas. Clay then talked about a recent study that IHS Markit had completed on Shale Crescent. He showed the location of Shale Crescent USA compared to Texas. It was easy for them to understand our transportation cost advantage compared to that of the Gulf Coast. After every meeting we had, a consistent refrain was heard, “We had no idea.” Now the Japanese know.

This high-tech reindustrialization in our region has already begun. Companies like

Hino and Solvay have already announced expansions in the Ohio Valley. A new methanol plant is under construction in Charleston. Other petrochemical companies are very quietly expanding. I talked to a plant manager recently that is in the process of hiring 20 people with salaries of \$80,000-plus. Most of my tech students at Pierpont Community and Technical College, where I teach leadership courses, already have job offers and they don’t graduate until May! These are career oriented jobs.

Using our natural gas to bring industry to the Shale Crescent USA is a win for all of the states in the region, especially West Virginia and its people. Now is the time to take advantage of the resources we have been blessed with to grow our economy and population again. As West Virginians and Americans, now is the time to work toward the common goal of enhancing the standard of living and quality of life for our people.

The Japan trip was just a beginning. Economic development isn’t a sprint – it is a marathon. And every successful marathon starts by finishing the first mile. We have run our first mile. We all can tell our story. It is a great one! The Japanese love it.

Thoughts to ponder. ♪