



Appalachia rising

MICHAEL WISE | ENERGY INSIGHTS | MAY 26, 2017

As you travel through Appalachia, it's hard not to be struck by the natural beauty of the region, especially in and around southeast Ohio and West Virginia. Behind the green trees and rolling hills, however, are serious economic challenges – many of which can be attributed to the timber, coal, oil, and steel booms and busts that have hit this area disproportionately hard compared to the rest of America. In his book "Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis" author J.D. Vance powerfully reveals how economic turbulence has contributed to the decay in Appalachian families and communities, culminating now in an opioid epidemic. In another must-read book, "Dreamland: The True Tale of America's Opiate Epidemic." author Sam Quinones chronicles how this epidemic has its origins in the Appalachian town of Portsmouth, Ohio.

In the midst of this crisis, there is a developing economic hope. The shale industry has invested more dollars, more quickly, in Ohio than any other industry in the history of the state. Cleveland State, Youngstown State, and JOBS OH [released a study this week](#) showing that over \$50 billion had been invested in Ohio by the upstream, midstream, and downstream shale industry in the last five years alone.

An overwhelming amount of these historic investments--almost \$40 billion--have been made by producers like Gulfport Energy, which is the largest producer of natural gas in Ohio and has more rigs running in Ohio and the entire Appalachian Basin than any other driller.

Downstream investment is still in its infancy stage, but in the future could eclipse upstream investment. I attended a Shale Crescent USA event in Parkersburg, West Virginia, this week and heard an update about downstream. The vision of this tristate (OH, PA, WV) group is to make the region the petro chemical capital of the world. No other place in the world can match the cheap natural gas, water resources, skilled workforce, and cheap power. Here is a [great clip from the event](#). (And below you'll find a picture of me and keynote speaker and West Virginia University men's basketball coach Bob Huggins, who I coached against as an assistant with Ashland College way back in 1985!)

The shale industry is a blessing for Appalachia – but not a cure for all its ills. The Foundation for Appalachian Ohio and others are developing long term strategies to address the crisis, and they are partnering with companies like [McDonald Hopkins](#), [Gulfport Energy](#), [Ohio CAT](#), and many others. We have a wonderful opportunity to build off of the benefits of the shale industry, but it will take partners and vision from all over Ohio to make lasting change.



West Virginia University men's basketball coach Bob Huggins and McDonald Hopkins attorney Mike Wise



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