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O'Malley takes cautious view of shale drilling for gas in western Md.; science, safety first

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ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley is urging a cautious approach to natural gas drilling in western Maryland.

A spokesman says O'Malley told local farmers, landowners and environmentalists at a meeting Monday near Grantsville that his administration will consider science and safety assurances in reviewing pending applications to drill in the Marcellus Shale beneath parts of the state's western panhandle.

The Maryland Petroleum Council is criticizing O'Malley for supporting legislation that would mandate a drilling study, with a report due in August 2013.

The group says the Marcellus Shale can help create jobs and clean energy, and that it shouldn't take state regulators nearly 2 ½ years to incorporate lessons learned elsewhere.

Spokesman Shaun Adamec says the issuance of drilling permits isn't contingent on the study.

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