10.16.12 Meeting with Seitel Data, a seismic testing company

Attendees:

* Robert Denney, Surface Agent with Seitel Data
* Larry Lee, Allegheny College Senior Associate Vice President
* Kelly Boulton, Allegheny College Sustainability Coordinator
* Brian Gillette, Allegheny College Assistant Director of Physical Plant

Seitel is hoping to begin seismic testing in the region beginning in March.

He showed us a map that plots the proposed placement of geophones and the drill/charge holes.

* Geophones are basically a data box connected to six wires with a small "plug" at each wire end with 4" probes which are pressed into the earth.  The six wires/probes form a 4-6' square.  A receiver line is a line of geophones (about 220' apart) running basically east to west.  Parallel receiver lines are about 300' apart.
* Drill/charge holes are laid out in parallel diagonal lines.  Ideally they like to drill 96 holes for every square mile.  Mr. Denny indicated that in a perfect situation they would want to place 35 drill/charge holes in the  Bousson area, but he did say that they could possibly do it with as few as 10-15, even though this is not ideal for their testing.  Each hole is a 3" diameter and 30' deep hole.  It's drilled by a 5x8' drilling rig on rubber tracks which weighs about 5000#.  They say they don't chainsaw a path, though they might cut some low branches.  We thought getting a 5x8' vehicle through most of Bousson would be impossible without cutting.  If we were to allow the testing, we could stipulate where we'd permit a drill/charge hole and where they'd have to skip, particularly if we felt they couldn't access it without impact.  For example, we could tell them they could only drill along existing trails and drives. Mr. Denney stated that we could even have our faculty, staff and students walk with them and select locations for the drill/charge holes.  We were adamant that we could not and will not allow any new pathways to be created for these vehicles if we were to consider allowing this testing.  During our conversation, Mr. Denney used a nature preserve in Louisiana as an example, where they had to use air boats and planes to drop in and transport equipment, so he did say they could work something out and would allow us to write any stipulations into the agreement to protect the grounds. Once the holes are drilled, they put a 3# charge in the bottom and backfill the hole with gravel.  Once all the geophones are placed and the holes are drilled and charged, they will set them off in swaths.  Basically, the charge is directional and blasts downwards, creating a vibration/soundwave down into the geology below.  The geophones receive the bounced back soundwaves and this data can be used for mapping purposes and to understand what oil/gas resources are present. Denney stated that in a few weeks we would not be able to tell where the blast holes had been except for a potential small depression due to settling.

We asked lots of questions about potential impacts on the property: trails, trees, undergrowth, footprint of drill holes, water resources.    While we didn’t ask directly, we also recognize that soil compaction and erosion could be other side effects.