

Student Spotlight-Lauren Fisher Studies Impact of Shale Drilling on Environment

WASHINGTON, PA (Nov. 21, 2013)—A Washington & Jefferson College (W&J) student has taken her Chemistry studies to the next level, applying what she's learned in the classroom to a real-world study of an industry's environmental impact on Western Pennsylvania.

For her independent study, senior Lauren Fisher is analyzing water samples from regional Marcellus shale gas drilling sites to assess whether the work has an impact on local waterways.

"The drilling involves hydraulic fracturing in which harmful volatile organic compounds and toxic wastewater can be released into the environment," said Fisher, a Chemistry and Philosophy major.

Fisher said she picked up many instrumental analysis techniques during her Physical Chemistry lab last fall that she never thought she would understand. Once learned, she was fascinated by how much they could tell a person about a compound.

"I honestly did not know that the HPLC, and ICP-OES would be so important in analyzing substances," she said. "Ever since I learned the trick, I was hooked."

Fisher plans to attend medical school and said likes studying and finding ways to address the possible health risks associated with hydrofracking through the use her chemistry knowledge.

This information was provided by W&J senior Julia Pacilio and the W&J Chemistry Department.

