



## **News for Immediate Release**

**May 23, 2014**

### **Governor Corbett Issues Executive Order Protecting State Forests, Parks from Gas Leasing that Involves Surface Disturbance**

**Harrisburg** – Governor Tom Corbett today issued an executive order prohibiting leasing for natural gas development in Pennsylvania’s state parks and forests that would result in additional long-term surface disturbance.

The order supports the governor’s budget proposal to generate \$75 million to help meet critical priorities. Limited leasing will allow natural gas to be extracted from deep beneath the surface only when there will be no additional long-term disturbance on state forest and park lands. The order will only allow gas to be extracted horizontally through wells located on adjacent private lands or previously leased areas of the state forest.

“With this executive order, I am directing that the commonwealth maintain a moratorium on any additional gas leasing of DCNR lands that involves long-term surface disturbance, such as placing well pads, roads or pipelines in the newly-leased areas,” Corbett said. “This balanced approach will ensure that the special characteristics and habitats of DCNR lands are conserved and protected, and will also provide for historic investments in conservation programs, our schools and quality health care, without raising taxes on Pennsylvanians.”

The governor noted that specific areas and acreage will be analyzed by reviewing interest from oil and gas operators who can access the gas through horizontal drilling without additional disturbance on the surface of DCNR lands.

“Future royalties from these leases will be dedicated to expanding our system by acquiring lands with high conservation value and ecological importance, purchasing privately-held subsurface rights for existing DCNR lands and improving state parks and forests,” Corbett said.

The Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry, one of the largest economic advocacy groups in the commonwealth, supported the governor’s action.

“Balancing our efforts to responsibly develop the state’s natural gas resources with the need to preserve our renowned state parks and forest is extremely important to the future of this Commonwealth,” Gene Barr, President and CEO of the PA Chamber of Business and Industry said. “We know that we can safely and efficiently protect our state’s natural lands while still benefiting from the economic

opportunities that come with growing the natural gas industry and making Pennsylvania a world leader in energy production.”

“The commonwealth’s state forest system has been certified as ‘well-managed’ longer than any other in the country, and continues to receive that distinction after five years of gas development in the Marcellus shale formation,” DCNR Secretary Ellen Ferretti said. “I am confident that DCNR can continue to manage our system for a variety of uses and values, including ecological integrity, outdoor recreation and the environmentally sound extraction of underground resources.”

The executive order is effective immediately. To download a copy, visit the Office of Administration’s website at [www.oa.state.pa.us](http://www.oa.state.pa.us), select “Records and Directives” and “Executive Orders.”

Information about the proposal is included in a fact sheet on the DCNR website at [www.dcnr.state.pa.us](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us), choose “Gas Drilling on State Forests” under “Quick Links,” then “Policy and Guidelines.”

Since the Governor’s budget proposal in February, DCNR staff have made presentations for and answered questions from the department’s citizens and natural gas advisory committees, as well as environmental organizations.

Governor Corbett’s budget also includes the initiative **Enhance Penn’s Woods**, a 2-year, more than \$200 million investment in improving state parks and forests that is the largest funding commitment for this purpose in commonwealth history.

“Pennsylvania is home to a world-class state park and forest system, and my proposed budget gives an historic boost to conservation and protection of our natural resources,” Corbett said.

Corbett noted that since 2011, Pennsylvania has added almost 8,000 acres to its state park and forest system. **Enhance Penn’s Woods** would provide funding for an additional 20,000 acres.

Pennsylvania has 120 state parks totaling more than 200,000 acres, and 2.2 million acres in 20 state forest districts. For more information on state parks and forests, visit [www.dcnr.state.pa.us](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us).

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**Editor’s Note:** The text of the Governor’s executive order follows:

WHEREAS, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) is the state agency charged with ensuring the stewardship and protection of state forest and state park lands for the benefit of all citizens; and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania is home to a world-class state forest and state park system, comprising over 2.2 million acres of state forest land and 200,000 acres of state park land contained within 120 state park and conservation areas; and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania's award-winning state parks provide opportunities to enjoy healthful outdoor recreation and serve as classrooms for environmental education in a setting where natural, scenic, aesthetic and historical values are preserved for current and future generations while hosting 38 million visitors annually, contributing \$1.2 billion annually to the commonwealth's economy and providing more than 13,000 jobs; and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania's state forest system is managed for a variety of uses and values, including ecological integrity; wild character; drinking water supply protection; recreation; plant and animal habitat; high-quality timber; and the environmentally sound utilization of mineral resources; and

WHEREAS, the international Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) has developed a set of principles and criteria that apply to FSC-certified forests around the world, and FSC forest-management certification confirms that a specific area of forest is being managed in accordance with the FSC principles and criteria; and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania's state forest system has been independently certified to be in adherence with the gold standard for environmentally and socially responsible forestry established by the FSC, and Pennsylvania's state forest system has been FSC-certified longer than any other state forest system in the United States; and

WHEREAS, in December 2012, after five years of natural gas development in the Marcellus shale formation, the Rainforest Alliance's annual audit of Pennsylvania's conformance with the FSC certification found that certification requirements are being met and recommended maintenance of certification; and

WHEREAS, an independent review of Pennsylvania's state forest system in 2013 by Scientific Certification Systems, a certification body accredited by the FSC, recommended that Pennsylvania's state forest system be awarded FSC certification as a "Well Managed Forest"; and

WHEREAS, the *Conservation and Natural Resources Act (Act of June 28, 1995, P.L. 89, No. 18)* authorizes DCNR to enter into leases for the

disposition of oil and natural gas when doing so would be in the best interests of the commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, DCNR has the responsibility and expertise to approach shale gas development in a way that efficiently utilizes commonwealth energy resources while balancing the many uses, values and overall sustainability of the state parks and state forest system; and

WHEREAS, the Governor's Marcellus Shale Advisory Commission, in accordance with *Executive Order 2011-01*, unanimously adopted a report and accompanying recommendations on the safe and responsible development of unconventional shale gas resources, and the Commission recommended that any future leasing of state forest land should be limited to agreements which result in no or minimal surface impact to commonwealth-owned land; and

WHEREAS, the Pennsylvania General Assembly enacted the *2012 Oil and Gas Act (Act of Feb. 14, 2012, P.L. 87, No. 13) (Act 13)*, which significantly enhanced the environmental protection standards for shale gas resource development in the commonwealth, including new protections for rivers, streams, water wells and public water supplies, well site inspection and enforcement, public notice and information sharing, remediation standards, and other enhancements; and

WHEREAS, *Article 1, Section 27 of the Constitution of Pennsylvania*, recognizes the right of citizens to clean water and pure air and establishes the commonwealth's duty to conserve and maintain Pennsylvania's public natural resources for the benefit of all the people; and

WHEREAS, *Executive Order 2010-05, Leasing of State Forest and State Park Land for Oil and Gas Development* issued by Governor Edward G. Rendell on October 26, 2010 ordered that no lands owned and managed by DCNR shall be leased for oil and gas development; and

WHEREAS, oil and natural gas development which results in no additional surface disturbance to state park and forest lands managed by DCNR is consistent with ensuring the stewardship and protection of such lands for the benefit of all the citizens, and with the requirements of *Article 1, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution*;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Tom Corbett, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and other laws do hereby direct the following:

- 1. DCNR Oil and Gas Leasing.** As of the date of this Executive Order, no state forest or state park land may be leased for oil and natural gas development which would result in additional surface disturbance on state forest or state park lands.

- 2. Use of Oil and Gas Royalty Revenue to Buy Oil and Gas and Other Mineral Rights and to Provide Improvements in State Parks and State Forests.** DCNR shall seek, in accordance with applicable laws, to utilize the royalty revenue generated from oil and natural gas leasing and development to:
  - a. repair and improve upon the infrastructure and amenities of the state forest and state park systems;
  - b. prioritize and acquire high-value inholding lands, indentures and areas of high conservation value or ecological importance; and
  - c. prioritize and acquire privately-owned oil, natural gas, and other mineral rights underlying high-value surface lands owned by DCNR.
- 3. Effective Date.** This Executive Order shall take effect immediately.
- 4. Termination Date.** This Executive Order shall remain in effect until amended or rescinded by the Governor.
- 5. Rescission.** Effective immediately, *Executive Order 2010-05* is hereby rescinded.