

JAN 28 2010



**Governor's Advisory Council for Hunting, Fishing and Conservation**

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January 26, 2010

Dear Governor,

At the two previous quarterly meetings of the Governor's Advisory Council on Hunting Fishing and Conservation (GACHFC), Council heard numerous presenters on the Marcellus Shale gas development that is taking place here in Pennsylvania. As a diverse group of conservation-minded individuals, they thought it important to become better informed on this very important matter. From an economic development and energy independence standpoint, the prospects of the Marcellus Shale industry hold great promise for the Commonwealth and may provide positive benefits for decades to come.

Unfortunately, as is often the case, boons such as this can also have a downside. We only need look to the not too distant past here in Pennsylvania, when unregulated timber and mining practices created huge problems that the citizens of this Commonwealth are still trying to address.

For these reasons, the GACHFC by unanimous vote is endorsing a Natural Gas Extraction Impact Fee to be implemented by state Government. Council believes that it is crucial that the lion's share of revenue from this fee be used to insure adequate staffing of our environmental and conservation agencies that play such a critical role in protecting these resources. This fee should be used to help fund the departments of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), sound conservation programs such as Growing Greener and the Pennsylvania Game and Fish & Boat commissions as well.

Pennsylvania is the ONLY state, including Texas and Alaska, with major natural gas deposits beneath it that does not have some type of fee associated with the extraction of that gas. Huge Marcellus Shale natural gas reserves lie beneath our Commonwealth. The industry is developing and will continue to develop these valuable reserves. Therefore, the Governor's Advisory Council on Hunting Fishing and Conservation urges your strong support of a Natural Gas Extraction Impact Fee that will benefit not only the conservation agencies and programs of this Commonwealth, but also the people they serve.

The Council does not want to suggest that Marcellus development will occur without regulation or oversight. However, this development will not come without problems and cost. These costs will burden our local governments and our environment.

This situation is made worse by the fact that it is occurring at a time when Pennsylvania, like other states, is struggling under the weight of a national economic downturn the likes of which this nation has not seen in 75 years. Even after severe spending cuts, it has still been a challenge to maintain the core functions of government.

As Pennsylvanians, we are fortunate that over 100 years ago, forward-thinking government officials saw fit to purchase huge holdings of public land. This land was and is intended to conserve and sustain Pennsylvania's natural resources for present and future generations' use and enjoyment. The Pennsylvania state forest system is the finest in the United States and something that we should all be proud of. These expanses of public land provide countless opportunities for hunters, fisherman and conservationists alike.

Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution states: "The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania's public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come. As Trustee of these resources, the Commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all the people."

Council has serious concerns that during these difficult economic times, government officials may look to our state forest system as the sole way of addressing the Commonwealth's budget woes. There is no question that our public land can and must play a role in this effort, but we should not disregard those words in our Constitution and over a century of sound conservation practice for some short-term monetary benefit. Over-drilling on our State Forest system will cause serious issues in the areas of water quality and forest fragmentation, as well as lost opportunities for sportsmen and conservationists alike.

Respectfully submitted,



Linda Steiner

Chair

Governors Advisory Council on Hunting Fishing and Conservation

cc: House and Senate Environmental Resource and Energy Committee  
House and Senate Game and Fisheries Committee

Council Members and their county of residence:

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