



PA Environment Digest

An Update On Environmental Issues In PA

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Sen. Scarnati Pushes Governor, House Republicans To Agree On Marcellus Bill

Shortly after being sworn in as President Pro Tempore of the Senate, Sen. Joe Scarnati (R-Jefferson) told reporters, "I would strongly recommend that we have this (Marcellus Shale legislation) wrapped up before the budget address (February 7). The people want it done. If it isn't done, it's going to be an issue for 2012."

Otherwise, he said, reconciling the different Senate and House versions of the drilling fee and environmental protection measures would be "complicated" by debates over the state budget.

"What we saw last year was the fact that Shale could've held up this budget greatly," said Sen. Scarnati. "We respected the wish of the Governor to wait for the (Marcellus Shale) Commission."

Sen. Scarnati noted the decision by five Republican Senators from Southeast Pennsylvania last month to vote for an amendment offered by Sen. John Yudichak (D-Luzerne), Minority Chair of the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, for a higher \$75,000 per well fee shows the degree of support in the Senate for a higher fee and using some fee revenue for statewide needs.

In December, the House unanimously non-concurred in changes made by the Senate to [House Bill 1950](#) (Ellis-R-Butler) imposing a Marcellus Shale drilling fee and enacting a laundry list of additional environmental protection measures related to drilling.

The [Senate earlier amended](#) House Bill 1950 to include the provisions of its own version of a drilling fee and environmental protection provisions from [Senate Bill 1100](#) (Scarnati-R-Jefferson).



The [House-passed](#) version of [House Bill 1950](#) contains an optional, county-adopted drilling fee favored by Gov. Corbett while the Senate Bill includes a uniform, higher state-imposed fee.

The House version, however, includes transfers from the DCNR Oil and Gas Fund to the award-winning [Growing Greener Program](#). In addition to providing funding to deal with the local impacts of drilling, fee income also supports other statewide environmental programs and county conservation districts.

The Senate drilling fee would also support local programs designed to deal with the impacts of drilling and conservation districts, but would give money to the Commonwealth Financing Authority for infrastructure and watershed restoration projects.

A summary, the [Senate Fiscal Note](#) and the [House Fiscal Note](#) are available for the bills.

The Senate is expect to insist on its amendments to House Bill 1950 when they and the House return to session on January 17 and name members to the conference committee, however, Senate and House Republicans and representatives of the Governor's Office continue to meet to work on a compromise measure.

NewsClips: [Senate Leader Sees Crunch Time On Shale Bill](#)
[Sen. Scarnati Urges Action On Drilling Fee In January](#)
[Drilling Fee Deadline: Before Corbett's Budget Address](#)
[Fair Tax On Gas Drillers Could Help Alleviate Shortfall](#)