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Corbett lifts ban on Marcellus Shale drilling in state forests

Pittsburgh Business Times - by Anya Litvak

Date: Monday, February 21, 2011, 11:45am EST



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In one of the first promised reversals of former Pennsylvania Gov. Ed [Rendell's Marcellus Shale policy](#), the Corbett administration has rescinded a policy in effect for the past four months that effectively put a moratorium on new leasing for natural gas drilling in state forests.

The document called "Policy for the Evaluation of Impacts of Oil and Gas Development on State Parks and State Forests" has been rescinded and erased from the DEP website.

[When it went into effect in October](#), the policy required any operators who wanted to drill on public land to get an assessment of environmental impacts from the Department of Conservation and National Resources before applying for a permit with the Department of Environmental Protection.

In assessing their request, DCNR would consider: "threatened and endangered species habitat; wildlife corridors; water resources; scenic viewsheds; public recreation areas; wetlands and floodplains; high-value trees and regeneration areas; avoiding steep slopes; pathways for invasive species; air quality; noise; and road placement and construction methods."

The policy, coupled with a [DCNR study](#) that concluded that "no additional leasing involving surface disturbance can occur without significantly altering the ecological integrity and wild character of our state forest system" amounted to a moratorium on new drilling on public land.

The rescission, published in the [Pennsylvania Bulletin on Saturday](#), takes DCNR out of the equation. The DEP justified the reversal like this:

"This document, which was not subject to advanced public comment or review, is being rescinded as unnecessary and redundant of existing practice. The Department is implementing Section 205(c) and will continue to do so. The Department will continue to consider the input of all applicable parties with respect to public resources outlined in Section 205(c)."

Section 205(c) deals with well location restrictions.