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## DEP nominee weighs whether more water testing needed

BY ROBERT SWIFT (HARRISBURG BUREAU CHIEF)

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HARRISBURG - The state Department of Environmental Protection is weighing its response to newly raised concerns about the level of naturally occurring radioactive materials in Marcellus Shale wastewater, including whether more testing of public water supplies is needed, the nominee to head the agency told a Senate panel Wednesday.

Michael Krancer, Gov. Tom Corbett's nominee for DEP secretary, won a unanimous endorsement from the Senate Environmental Protection and Energy Committee for his pending confirmation vote before that chamber. Mr. Krancer has served as a judge on the state Environmental Hearing Board which hears appeals of DEP orders and regulations.

Before the committee vote, Mr. Krancer was grilled by senators about information in a Sunday New York Times article about a lack of tests for the presence of radioactive materials at 65 public water intakes downstream of treatment plants that have discharged Marcellus Shale wastewater after treatment into rivers. Democratic U.S. Sen. Bob Casey and other officials have called for testing for radioactive materials in public drinking water supplies in the wake of the article.

"It is one of the things we are considering," said Mr. Krancer.

A subsequent New York Times article has raised questions about the extent and effectiveness of efforts by the natural gas industry to recycle wastewater from the fracking process. Mr. Krancer said at least 70 percent of the drilling wastewater in Pennsylvania is being recycled, but in answer to a question from state Sen. John Yudichak, D-14, Nanticoke, he said he didn't know if any wastewater treatment plants in Northeast Pennsylvania were accepting gas drilling wastewater. The recycling operations in Pennsylvania can also include wastewater from oil and shallow well gas drilling, added Mr. Krancer.

Sen. Gene Yaw, R-23, Williamsport, criticized what he called "half-truths" in The New York Times article about wastewater recycling practices and invited Mr. Krancer to tour recycling operations in his district. Mr. Krancer said he

disputes a number of assertions in The New York Times articles, specifically a reference about the number of state oil and gas inspectors.

DEP has 78 staffers working on inspections when supervisors and support personnel are also counted, he said. Fees paid by drillers on well permit applications will enable DEP to hire more inspectors as the need arises.

"We do have boots on the ground," he added.

On another matter, Mr. Krancer said he rescinded a recently published DEP guideline about how to measure air pollution from drilling activities because he was unsure how it meshes with federal law, couldn't determine who drafted it and decided that public comment is needed.

Environmentalists have criticized the action as hampering regulation of pollution from gas compressor stations.

Contact the writer: rswift@timeshamrock.com

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