

Dear Senator Eichelberger:

In April 2008 Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) opened 75,000 acres of our State Forests to leasing by the gas companies drilling the Marcellus shale. Some of your colleagues now are proposing to force DCNR to lease an additional 390,000 acres of State Forest land to the gas industry.

Marcellus Gas wells have ten times the impact of any gas wells you have ever seen: Each well requires the clearing of dozens of acres of forest and every well requires more than a million gallons of water to fracture the 5,000 foot deep wells.

The DCNR has objected strongly to this proposal, stating that *“Rampant, unplanned leasing of forest lands would severely jeopardize DCNR’s ability to retain its third-party certification (of timber) and to maintain ecologically sound forest management.”*

It is important to note that those politicians want to lease additional vast parts of our State Forest in lieu of having the gas drillers pull their own weight via paying a fee on the gas they extract from State Forests. We still suffer from the damage from coal extraction –and taxpayers continue to pay for the cleanup of what was done 100 years ago. Some people haven’t learned from the mistakes of the past – now they want to help the gas industry to ravage our public lands without setting money aside for fixing their damage. The Marcellus gas field will be an economic boon for the industry but Pennsylvania taxpayers will be stuck (again) for the cleanup of the damage.

Juniata Valley Audubon, a local conservation organization with 450 members in the Altoona area, urges you to oppose opening additional State Forest lands to Marcellus shale gas drilling. Forest conservation — not energy extraction — should be the overarching purpose of our State Forests.

Sincerely,

Stan Kotala, M.D.
Conservation Chair
JVAS