



September 28, 2010

The Honorable Edward Rendell  
Governor  
225 Main Capitol  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Rendell:

I am writing on behalf of the Pennsylvania Biological Survey (PABS) to express our support of a tax on Marcellus Shale drilling in Pennsylvania with a portion of that tax reserved for environmental protection. Specifically, the members of PABS are concerned about the potential environmental damage caused by natural gas extraction from the Marcellus shale rock formation. Much remains unknown about drilling in the Marcellus Formation, possibly the third largest gas reserve in the world. Impacts from the millions of gallons of water needed to drill each well need to be monitored and ways to treat the high concentration of chloride in the waste water need to be found. Toxicity of products used in the drilling process and potential radioactivity of Marcellus shale wastes (uranium, strontium, and selenium) also should be monitored. Additionally the infrastructure required to support well pads and drilling equipment will fragment intact forest landscapes that are required by many of our native wildlife species. In particular, we urge any tax revenues to be used as an opportunity to protect habitat by minimizing the fragmenting effects of the drilling through the development and timely implementation of adaptive management practices for conserving our wildlife and forest resources. For example, the trained staff, equipment, and protocols needed to support robust independent monitoring of site development, production, retirement, and related environmental impacts should be supported using revenue from a Marcellus tax.

We are concerned about the rapid development occurring in the areas that contain the Marcellus Shale formation prior to a full understanding of all the environmental impacts to soil, water, plants, and wildlife. There is a strong need for independent, peer-reviewed science to ensure proper siting and management of Marcellus Shale drilling activities—especially on public lands. A statewide screening process for areas of high ecological risk and/or value also should be instituted and funded by Marcellus tax revenues.

The Pennsylvania Biological Survey (PABS) is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to increase the knowledge of and foster the perpetuation of the natural biological diversity of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Scientists are the backbone of PABS but our membership also includes representatives of state and federal agencies concerned with natural resource management, and representatives of non-profit conservation organizations.

Our members acknowledge the economic incentives for Marcellus Shale drilling especially in this time of economic crisis. However, we should not “sacrifice the legacy of Pennsylvania’s natural resources for short-term economic gain or allow corporations unfettered access to natural resources without fully recognizing and mitigating the impacts, lest future taxpayers be burdened with the costs of restoring clean water and healthy forests. The PABS membership stands willing to work with you and the rest of state government to find the best solutions to protect our natural resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carolyn G. Mahan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Carolyn" being more prominent than the last name "Mahan".

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C: Carl Roe, Pennsylvania Game Commission; J. Quigley, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources; John Hanger, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, John Arway, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission