



June 10, 2009

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 serious concerns regarding your **proposed reallocation of funds derived from the recent Marcellus Shale gas leases on State Forest lands.** When the Oil and Gas Lease Fund was created in 1955, the general assembly committed a stream of funding to be re-invested in the public lands of Pennsylvania in order to mitigate damage caused by natural resource extraction. 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) need to be monitored. Pennsylvania needs to provide the funding to develop the Marcellus in an environmentally sound manner. However, by using oil and gas lease funds, to pay for our state's day-to-day operations, we would lose the opportunity to improve the state's green infrastructure and ensure the protection of our natural resources. In the past, funds generated from oil and gas leases were used for maintaining and constructing the green infrastructure in our state parks and forests. Funds generated also could be used for habitat restoration, land acquisition, wildlife research, acid mine damage remediation, and monitoring the environmental effects of Marcellus drilling.

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. Our membership includes scientists, representatives of state and federal agencies concerned with natural resource management, and representatives of non-profit conservation organizations.

The PABS strongly feels that the gas leasing revenues from our publicly-owned conservation areas should be dedicated to conservation purposes consistent with the intentions of the Oil and Gas Act. At the very least, if you and members of the General Assembly decide to use the Oil and Gas Lease Fund to help balance the budget shortfall, we ask that you explicitly indicate that this will be a temporary, emergency measure in light of the current economic situation. Thank you for considering our concerns. Our members are willing to work with you and members of the General Assembly to find the best solutions to protect our natural resources while generating jobs in the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

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