

HB150 – State Forest Natural Gas Lease Moratorium Act Bill Summary

Purpose: HB150 bill would impose a three-year moratorium on additional leasing of State forest lands for natural gas drilling, exploration, and production.

Throughout the moratorium, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources would monitor and assess the impact of previous leasing and drilling on State forest land.

After the three-year moratorium, the DCNR would not lease further State forest land unless it determines that the State forest can be sustained in a balanced state.

Comprehensive Environmental Impact Review:

Within two years after the start of the moratorium, DCNR would prepare a Comprehensive Environmental Impact Review that will include, among other things:

1. A projection of the maximum possible development on State forest lands;
2. An assessment of the potential impacts on the forest ecosystem, forest uses and users;
3. The impacts that drilling on proximate lands might have on the State forest;
4. The effects that Marcellus development has on the administration and workload of DCNR.

DCNR Annual Report:

Beginning in year three of the moratorium, the DCNR shall submit an annual report to the General Assembly and the Governor regarding the effects of natural gas exploration, drilling and production on State forest lands.

The contents of the report shall include the effects on:

1. Water and soil quality;
2. Forest fragmentation;
3. Plants, wildlife, habitats, and invasive species;
4. Air quality;
5. Social fabric (inc. tourism, recreation, hunting, fishing, community aesthetics).

LBFC Study:

The Legislative Budget and Finance Committee shall conduct a study regarding the environmental, economic, and societal impacts of the leasing of State forest lands three years after the completion of the moratorium. The study will analyze, among other things, the separate environmental, economic, and societal impacts to both the Commonwealth and its citizens, the cumulative of development on State forest lands, a projection of the future impacts, the impact on communities in close proximity, and others.