



December 7, 2016

Seth Pelepko, P.G.
Department of Environmental Protection, Policy Office
Rachel Carson State Office Building
P.O. Box 2063
Harrisburg, PA 17105-2063

Submitted via eComment

RE: DEP ID: 800-0810-001 -- Guidelines for Implementing Area of Review (AOR) Regulatory Requirement for Unconventional Wells

Dear Mr. Pelepko,

The Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) and Pennsylvania Environmental Council respectfully submit these written comments on the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Guidelines for Implementing Area of Review (AOR) Regulatory Requirement for Unconventional Wells. We strongly support the adoption of these Guidelines.

Pennsylvania has had oil and gas development for nearly 150 years, and many hundreds of thousands of wells have been drilled during that time. But well construction practices and recordkeeping practices for the first hundred years of activity were far below today's standards, leaving the Commonwealth with innumerable potential fluid and contaminant conduits scattered in and around current hydraulic fracturing activity in both conventional and unconventional formations. When hydraulic fracturing is performed on a new or existing well, nearby wells – abandoned, poorly constructed, and even currently operating wells – can transmit fluids to protected groundwater and the surface unless precautions are taken. This is a significant safety and environmental risk.

EDF commends the DEP for including provisions in Chapter 78a that require such precautions, and for developing Guidelines designed to assist operators in meeting the requirements. The program outlined in the Guidelines will help reduce the number of well communication incidents and provide the DEP, the industry, and the public with a much better understanding of subsurface conditions – enabling better environmental performance and more predictable frac jobs.

The Guidelines are the product of months of considerable effort, research, and deep thought by the Department, approximately twenty representatives of both unconventional and conventional operators in Pennsylvania, as well as EDF. EDF appreciated its inclusion in the working group that developed the Guidelines, and especially the open and collaborative spirit of industry in crafting workable procedures for implementing the AOR rules.

Many other states have successfully implemented AOR rules or regulatory programs, and EDF and PEC expect that with the extensive input of industry throughout the working group process, the Guidelines will allow smooth implementation of AOR in Pennsylvania in the months and years to come.

Respectfully submitted,

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