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DEP ORDERS PARTIAL SHUTDOWN OF TWO NATURAL GAS DRILLING OPERATIONS IN LYCOMING COUNTY

Action Coincides with Similar Order by Susquehanna River Basin Commission

HARRISBURG – The Department of Environmental Protection today ordered two natural gas drilling companies to suspend a portion of their operations at separate sites in Lycoming County for violating Pennsylvania’s Clean Streams Law.

Range Resources - Appalachia LLC and Chief Oil and Gas LLC operate impoundment areas in Cogan House Township and Mifflin Township, respectively, that collect water for use in the companies’ exploratory drilling operations in the Marcellus Shale.

The impoundments draw tens of thousands of gallons of water per day from nearby waterways. Such large volume diversions could impair the existing uses of the waterways.

The Clean Streams Law empowers DEP to protect the quality of Pennsylvania’s waterways and the volume of water therein.

“Drilling for natural gas is a water intensive endeavor,” said DEP Northcentral Regional Office Director Robert Yowell. “That’s even more so in the case of the Marcellus Shale, where this type of drilling can often times consume millions of gallons of water. In the course of their operations, neither Range Resources nor Chief Oil and Gas have taken the necessary precautions to protect nearby streams from pollution or impairment during the drilling process.

“We need to ensure that bodies of water involved near Hoagland Run and First Fork Larry’s Creek—both high quality tributaries—and Mud Run and Big Sandy Run are protected for the

residents of Lycoming County and the entire Susquehanna watershed.”

DEP’s action coincides with an enforcement action taken by the Susquehanna River Basin Commission under its own regulatory authority.

Range Resources and Chief Oil and Gas failed to obtain the required approval from the SRBC for the ongoing water withdrawal. Permits are required for this type of activity because of the potential to impair or destroy the basin’s water resources and cause pollution.

“These orders will remain in effect until the department has received and approved a water management plan from both companies, and each firm has obtained the necessary permits,” said Yowell.

The water management plan will help ensure that drilling operations do not have an adverse effect on the nearby streams or water resources.

Current regulations for natural gas exploring and drilling in Pennsylvania call for operators to obtain proper permits to construct and develop oil and gas wells and prevent the pollution or destruction of the state’s water resources.

As the natural gas industry responds to increased energy market demands, Pennsylvania has become a hot-bed for gas exploration and development, particularly in the Marcellus Shale geologic formation. The department has received and reviewed a record-setting number of applications for gas wells permits over the past four years.

“All companies, in-state or out-of-state, planning natural gas drilling activities on Pennsylvania’s soil must abide by the commonwealth’s environmental rules and regulations that protect and safeguard the state’s natural resources,” said Yowell. “With increased interest and activity in oil and gas drilling throughout the state, Pennsylvania will experience a boost to its local economies, but we want to make sure that our environment and natural resources are not sacrificed in the process.”

DEP and other state agencies and commissions will begin conducting site inspections at all permitted natural gas exploration and drilling sites. During inspections, DEP field personnel will be on-hand to review procedures and regulations with operators and land-owners.

In June, DEP and its partners including the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, SRBC, the Delaware River Basin Commission and the County Conservation Districts will host current and prospective natural gas exploration operators and owners to discuss Pennsylvania’s oil and gas industry, the industry’s future, and the state’s environmental rules and regulations.

For more information, visit www.depweb.state.pa.us, keyword: Oil and gas.

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