

# PA Environment Digest

## An Update On Environmental Issues In PA

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Harrisburg, Pa

January 21, 2013

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### **CAC: DEP To Update 3 Major Public Participation Policies, Oil & Gas Regs Due Soon**

The Department of Environmental Protection announced Tuesday to the [Citizens Advisory Council](#) the agency will be updating each of the three major public participation policies in the department covering consideration of individual permits, regulatory and policy development and environmental justice.

Dan Lapato, Deputy Director of the Office of External Affairs, said DEP expects to release a draft of the policy covering public [participation in permits](#) by the February 19 meeting of the Council and outline concepts for changing the [regulatory and policy development](#) guidelines later in the Spring.

Holly Cairns, Director of the Office of Environmental Advocates, said the draft changes to the [environmental justice policy](#) are still undergoing internal review, but should also be ready for review in early Spring.

Other policies of the department cover the development and [publication of technical guidance](#), [advisory committee](#) operations and the [local municipal involvement process](#).

#### **Other Issues Considered**

The Council was provided with updates on other issues--

**Oil & Gas Regulations:** DEP said the [Oil and Gas Technical Advisory Board](#) will be scheduling meetings in mid-February and again in March to start its review of changes to Chapter 78 required by the 2012 Marcellus Shale drilling law.

**Permit Review Guarantee:** DEP expects to published its first update on the [Permit Review Decision Guarantee Program](#) on February 15. Lapato said the first statistics look “encouraging.”

**Water Testing:** Bonita Hoke, PA League of Women Voters, urged the Council to recommend DEP adopt a broader standard for testing water associated with drilling operations (SAC 946 vs. SAC 942). This is a follow up to a discussion of DEP [water testing standards](#) from last Fall.

Marge Hughes, Executive Director of the CAC said she was invited by DEP to facilitate a meeting with representatives of more than two dozen groups concerned with the same issue. Members of the Council recommended the League be invited to join that meeting.

**Budget Briefing Request:** Members of the Council requested DEP provide a briefing on the agency's FY 2013-14 budget request at the February 19 Council meeting. The Governor will outline his proposal on February 5 well before the meeting. Council Chair John Walliser also suggested DEP provide a presentation on the [agency's performance report](#) results released in December.

**Council Work Plan:** The Council continued its discussion of a work plan for this year to focus its activities on issues of priority importance. This effort was prompted by DEP's request for the Council to reduce its expenses and a 40 percent cut in its budget over the last five years.

Tentative priorities for the coming year include:

- Advancing transparency and public participation in policy development, program implementation, public service, enforcement actions and permitting decisions;
- Ongoing review and analysis of DEP activities as mandated by state law, including, among other issues: Act 54 Mine Subsidence and the Air Pollution Control Act;
- Providing a forum for issues brought by the public to the CAC;
- Consultation with and bringing issues to the attention of the General Assembly; and
- Evaluating DEP's ability to fulfill its statutorily mandated responsibilities and mission in light of continued budget cuts at the state and federal level.

The Council is also streamlining its committee structure to better reflect current budgetary limitations.

Final consideration of the work plan is scheduled for the February 19 meeting.

**Council Members:** DEP reported re-appointment or appointment of six Council members by the Governor was still in process. There are also vacancies or re-appointments pending by the House- 1 and the Senate- 1.

**Council Representatives:** The Council voted to appoint Cynthia Carrow, Terry Dayton, David Hess and Burt Waite as the Council's representatives to DEP's [Mining and Reclamation Advisory Board](#).

The next meeting of the Council is February 19. For more information, visit the DEP [Citizens Advisory Council](#) webpage or contact Marge Hughes, CAC Executive Director, by sending email to: [mahughes@pa.gov](mailto:mahughes@pa.gov).