

PA Environment Digest

An Update On Environmental Issues In PA

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Corbett Budget: \$45M For State Parks, Forests, More Gas Leasing, DEP Staff Cut

Gov. Tom Corbett Tuesday presented his 2014-15 budget to the General Assembly, telling lawmakers that the \$29.4 billion spending plan continues to drive the values of strategic investment and prudent fiscal management to address the Commonwealth's core funding needs.

His 2014-15 budget proposal includes the [Enhance Penn's Woods initiative](#) announced Saturday, a 2-year, more than \$200 million effort to repair and upgrade State Parks and State Forests through the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

The program includes \$45 million in additional monies from interest on the Growing Greener II bond funds and existing funding from the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund, Environmental Stewardship (Growing Greener) Fund and the Dirt and Gravel Road Program.

The budget proposal also relies on additional leasing of natural gas rights in State Forests to generate \$75 million more in revenue to DCNR's Oil and Gas Lease Fund. The Governor's [Budget Secretary Charles Zogby](#) said additional leasing would be near existing drilling sites and gas companies would not be allowed to construct new well pads.

Secretary Zogby said Gov. Corbett would be issuing a new Executive Order to replace the Executive Order Gov. Rendell issued in 2010 a few days before the gubernatorial election imposing a moratorium on leasing additional State Forest land. The Rendell Administration leased 137,000 acres of State Forest land for Marcellus Shale natural gas drilling.

No reduction in DCNR's complement was proposed

The Governor's budget proposes to reduce the complement of the Department of Environmental by another 66 positions to 2,663. Over the last 12 years, DEP's complement has been reduced by 548 positions since FY 2002-03 or 17 percent.

The Governor proposed a \$3.1 million increase in the Watershed Protection and Restoration funding allocation from the Environmental Stewardship (Growing Greener) Fund as well as a \$1 million reduction from the same Fund for abandoned mine reclamation.