

Outdoor Tourism at Risk

*By Edward Wilson, vice president
10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania*

In the 12-county Pennsylvania Wilds region of north central Pennsylvania, DCNR has spent more than \$140 million over six years to construct elk-watching facilities, build trails, upgrade state parks and enhance the experience of visitors to the region.

Other agencies made complementary investments in tourism marketing, infrastructure improvements and environmental restoration projects.

Research shows that these investments already are paying off in terms of increased visitation, visitor spending, tourism-related employment and tax revenues in a part of the state that desperately needs new economic opportunities. By rushing to open tens of thousands of additional acres of state forest land to gas drilling, however, the state risks killing the goose that lays the golden egg of tourism.

Excessive drilling will permanently change the aesthetics of the state forests, restrict access to trails, disturb habitat, interfere with hunting and fishing, and generally make our public lands less attractive to visitors.

State forests should be managed to benefit all Pennsylvanians, and that includes extracting resources in ways that are compatible with sound environmental stewardship. Let's not balance the budget on the back of our public land ...

Don't let what happened in Wyoming happen here!

The Jonah Field is 30,000 acres, and authorized for a total of 3600 wells. Pinedale, (locally called "The Mesa") is about 198,000 acres, and authorized for a total of 900 wells--and there's a proposal to add thousands more.



But as those numbers go up, other numbers are going down. Mule deer usage of winter range in Pinedale has decreased 46 percent over the last five years. Sage grouse populations closest to development areas are threatened. As for antelope, their 6,000-year-old migration corridor between Grand Teton National Park and the Upper Green River Basin is being squeezed. Early studies indicate radio-collared pronghorns are avoiding newly-developed areas.

Links to hunting, fishing and outdoor-interest publications can be found at

www.un-Naturalgas.org/hunting.htm

To contact your local action organization, go to:

www.DamascusCitizens.org

Hunting and Fishing at Risk



Has your quarry been drinking from drill cutting pits?
Open pit on BoosLaw Road, Smyrna, Chenango County

Gas drilling threatens

**WILDLIFE
HABITAT
ACCESS
SAFETY**

Wildlife at Risk

Drilling waters are toxic. A sagging three foot snow fence will not keep game from open pits of salty water. Migratory birds are attracted to these poisoned "ponds".

USDA and state food safety and inspection services quarantine livestock that come into contact with drilling fluids to prevent human consumption of potentially contaminated meat. Wildlife agencies are not taking the same safeguards: hunter-harvested game is being consumed despite possible health risks.

The Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture, a multi-agency partnership, found in its comprehensive review that habitat fragmentation and sedimentation are two of the major impacts limiting the health of brook trout populations.

Gas development has harmed sage grouse populations in western Wyoming, while in Alaska, geese have been affected. Out west, drilling activities have impacted elk and their habitat, especially during the construction and drilling phases. Drilling activities have forced pronghorn antelope and mule deer to increase their winter ranges.



Compressor Station in the Susquehannock State Forest

Habitat at Risk

In late August 2009, inspectors found evidence that Marcellus Shale waste fluids had impacted Alex Branch, a wild trout stream and high-quality fishery, and damaged the drinking water at a nearby hunting camp, where water tests found barium that was four times above the state and federal drinking water limits -- an amount that can cause vomiting, diarrhea and muscle weakness after drinking it for even a short period of time. (*Field and Stream*, March 2007)

Some hunters have been affected by gas drilling. One sporting goods store owner said hunters told him that they lost their traditional hunting spots in



Susquehanna County (PA) last deer season when the areas were deemed off limits due to gas drilling activity. (*Wilkes-Barre Times Leader* May 23, 2010)

Conservationists and labor leaders testified that energy development on public land is failing wildlife and squeezing out hunters and anglers. (*Field and Stream*, March 2007)

Even where gas companies halted operations for the first week of deer season, hunters were affected. Customers told one store owner that in the Hop Bottom and Springville areas, the gas companies were out before the season with helicopters laying cables for seismic testing. The process was noisy and that scared a lot of deer out the area and changed their patterns. (*Wilkes-Barre Times Leader* May 23, 2010)

Access and Safety at Risk

Before you hunt, ask yourself:

- Will the lease allow for hunting on leased land?
- Is it safe to fire a gun in a gas field?
- What happens if there's a leak and a gun is fired?
- What happens if a bullet hits a wellhead or pipeline?
- Will drilling activity put all the people involved at risk?
- Will well workers wear hunter orange? Will they remain in a designated area?

Planning to Eat What You Hunt?

- How vulnerable is game to the pollution that inevitably comes with hydro-fracking?
- How can wildlife, especially deer, be protected from consuming poisonous material at a drill site?
- Will it be safe to consume the meat from any wild game if the animal drinks from pits?
- Who will test venison for pollutants?
- Will the DEC or NYSDAM decide if hunter-harvested game can be consumed?
- How will the venison donation program be affected?