

Department of Environmental Protection Seeks Public Comment on Marcellus Shale Guidance Document

The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection has released draft guidance to better manage the activities of the oil and gas industry for appropriate water use and disposal when drilling in the Marcellus Shale formation.

The document was created by the Office of Oil and Gas and the Division of Water and Waste Management at the request of Cabinet Secretary Randy C. Huffman.

“New advancements in drilling technology have created increased interest in exploring the Marcellus Shale formation in New York, Pennsylvania, and recently in West Virginia,” Huffman said. “What we are concerned about is the increase in the amount of water used and the disposal of wastewater that results from using these new drilling techniques.”

The document addresses the need for drillers to be diligent about protecting the state’s waters. It also includes an addendum to the permit application that is to be completed when more than 5,000 barrels of water are to be used or disposed of.

It also advises drillers to consider options for recycling the fluid that results from the fracture process, as well as the need for proper treatment of those waters before disposal.

The agency is making the draft document available to industry and state citizens so they can review the document and is accepting comments about its contents until April 17.

“Making this draft available to the public is not required by law, but because of the concerns people have expressed about the increased use and disposal of water related to drilling in the Marcellus Shale formation, we felt it was appropriate to do so,” said Scott Mandirola, director of the Division of Water and Waste Management for the DEP.

A copy of the draft document is available for review on the agency’s website at www.wvdep.org/marcellusguidance. Comments about the draft can be submitted by email to DEP.Comments@wv.gov or mailed to the Public Information Office at 601 57th Street SE, Charleston, WV 25304.