
BUREAU OF FORESTRY

MEMO

TO: PA State Forest Natural Gas Operators

FROM: Craig A. Chapman, Oil and Gas Lease Management Section

DATE: March 26, 2020

RE: State Forest COVID-19 Update



The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has closed all state park and forest facilities across the commonwealth effective March 17, and continuing until April 30, to help slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus. While facilities have been closed, both state forest and state park lands remain open to the public for dispersed recreational opportunities. This has resulted in an unparalleled increase in visitor use of these public lands, especially in areas near the significant population centers of the state. Citizens are looking for opportunities to get outside, temporarily forget about the daily headlines, and reconnect with the state's bountiful and cherished natural resources. At times like these, it's a significant reminder of the critical services these lands provide to the public.

State forest oil and gas operators should be aware of, and continue to expect, a significant increase in public use on all roads which are open to travel. It is imperative that gated roads, which are restricted to public travel, remain closed. Department staff have reported an influx of visitors driving on restricted roads, or parking behind gates, because the gates were left open. All operators and their subcontractors must diligently close and lock all gates during their operations to dissuade unauthorized vehicular entry. Your immediate compliance with this request is sincerely appreciated.

Additionally, oil and gas operators should expect no change in the established review and approval process for infrastructure on state forest lands nor the processing time frames. Bureau of Forestry staff are still performing essential functions related to the administration of oil and gas activities in the field and central office staff are positioned to assure our daily work continues to move forward. The Department has always advocated for inclusive communications between operators, central office staff, and district staff. During this time, this approach to communications is even more imperative. Please continue to include all applicable staff on electronic communications to ensure infrastructure requests are properly addressed and processed without delay.

In closing, please continue to take precautions for not only your own health and safety, but the health and safety of others by following these tips:

- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing with a tissue or flexed elbow -- even when you are outside.
- Avoid touching your face, eyes, and nose.
- Practice social distancing and stay at least six feet away from other people.
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water.
- If soap and water are not available, carry hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol with you and use it regularly. Be sure to cover all surfaces of your hands and rub together until they feel dry.
- If you feel sick, stay at home.

conserve

sustain

enjoy

P.O. Box 8552, Harrisburg, PA 17015-8552 717-787-3444 (fax) 717-772-0271