

Guidelines for Administering Oil and Gas Activity on State Forest Lands
4th Edition
Revised 2016

The objective of this document is to establish and communicate a set of “guidelines” and Best Management Practices (BMP’s) that provide consistent, reasonable and appropriate direction for managing oil and gas activity on state forest lands in accordance with the Bureau’s mission.

Many significant changes have occurred since the release of the 2013 document. Technology and innovation within the oil and gas industry has continued to advance at a rapid pace; improving efficiencies and minimizing the impact of development on the landscape. For example, current horizontal wellbores have more than doubled in length compared to the first drilled wells. As such, natural gas is recovered from significantly more acreage with substantially less impact to the surface lands. Likewise, Bureau staff have continued to evolve through learned experiences, an improved appreciation for the fundamentals of natural gas development and better understanding of operational needs. Those “lessons learned”, from both perspectives, are actively applied through adaptive management to continually refine and direct our management approach on state forest lands.

As a public agency, the DCNR Bureau of Forestry is always welcoming and receptive to public comment. This revised document considered and incorporated applicable comments received following the release of the 2013 (3rd) version. In similar fashion, comments and input received after the release of the 4th edition of the *Guidelines for Administering Oil and Gas activity on State Forest Lands* will be considered and incorporated, as appropriate, into the next subsequent revision.

The Bureau of Forestry Gas Leadership Team was responsible for preparing the new draft which was vetted for comment to the Bureau of Forestry Gas Management Team. The revision process took nearly a year to complete. Every section of the document was subject to some level of modification. The 4th edition of the *Guidelines for Administering Oil and Gas Activities on State Forest Lands* is considered final and should be immediately incorporated into daily management activities.

The following synopsis was developed to provide an overview of the significant changes. This overview is arranged in two parts. The first highlights substantive changes to the overall document and the second focuses on modifications to the individual sections.

Overall

- Eliminated the following appendices and incorporated relevant information into the appropriate section: Bureau Approved Signage, Roads and Trade Secret/ Confidential Proprietary Information Notice

Purpose

- Improved description of subsurface resources currently being produced from state forest land

Key Principles

- Clarified the Bureau’s role in managing the surface in split estates
- Clearly identified DEP as the regulatory authority for oil and gas operations and DCNR as the land manager of oil and gas operations on state forest land

Bureau of Forestry Gas Management Team

- Updated forest district name changes

Recreation and Public Safety

- Increased emphasis on approaches that perpetuate aesthetics and wild character
- Elevated the importance of utilizing personal protective equipment, such as flame resistant outerwear, when working in proximity to live gas
- Instituted new guidance regarding blasting and the use of explosives during construction
- Developed guidance for the use of security cameras and electronic traffic control devices
- Modified considerations and increased emphasis on aesthetics, wild character and minimizing adverse impacts to recreational opportunities and experiences

Seismic Surveys

- Revised introduction to include more technically correct terms and information
- Updated the Bureau's review and approval process for seismic surveys
- Clarified what documents must be submitted by the operator for consideration and approval
- Revised best management practices and reorganized by specific categories

Well Pad Sites

- Identified expectations regarding post-construction stormwater management (PCSM) BMP's
- Included recommendations for reducing the volume of stone used in well pad construction

Wastewater Treatment, Storage, Transportation and Disposal

- Clarified approaches to remain consistent with OG-71 authorization, current DEP policies and Waste Management permitting related to treatment and transport of wastewater

Roads

- Increased emphasis and concentrated focus on planning and siting, avoiding user conflicts, construction, maintenance and rehabilitation
- Removed associated appendix and incorporated applicable information into section
- Developed a proactive approach to administering the use of roads in association with oil and gas activity

Pipelines

- Added new sub-sections including siting, materials, stream crossings, vegetation management and corridor rehabilitation
- Incorporated substantial additions to considerations and BMP's

Compressor Stations

- Re-organized and expanded upon compressor station siting considerations
- Increased emphasis regarding the use of vegetative screening to minimize aesthetic and noise impacts
- Developed guidance regarding permanent outdoor lighting and security cameras
- Noted our observation that electric compressors have generated less noise

Native Planting and Seeding

- Enhanced our considerations for the use of native plantings on state forest land to reflect experiences on recent projects

Non-Native Invasive Plants

- Updated invasive plant detection approach to reflect the Bureau's latest protocols

Site Rehabilitation

- Clarified the Bureau's descriptions of the terms site rehabilitation, revegetation, reclamation and restoration
- Added a timeline of rehabilitation steps and refined planning considerations

The Review and Approval Process

- Improved clarification on the review and approval process
- Re-emphasized that initial development planning occurs at the landscape level followed by comprehensive review of individual infrastructure components

Gas Program Waiver Requests

- Specified waiver requests must include a description of the resulting minimization of forest impact

Routine Field Inspections

- Modified the format to remain consistent with standardized forms used in other program areas

Documentation and Right-to-Know Law

- Added proof of oil and gas ownership/title documents to the list of documentation to be maintained in a permanent file
- Removed DEP inspection reports as a requirement to be maintained in the files
- Further clarified the process of determining public information versus confidential proprietary

Medical Emergencies and Pollution Events

- Identified expectations regarding spill notification protocols
- Defined procedure for initial documentation of a pollution incident by Bureau staff
- Refined guidance regarding coordination with DEP, press releases and public notice and sampling by Bureau staff

Appendix: Bureau Approved Signage

- Removed appendix and incorporated applicable information into the Recreation and Public Safety

Appendix A. Criteria for Wastewater Treatment Storage System Proposals

- Removed introduction and focused on the process

Appendix B. Planting and Seeding

- Revised and standardized the Planting and Seeding Guidelines for application across all Bureau program areas
- Reorganized layout and subsections
- Updated “Potentially invasive” and “Non-invasive” species lists
- Updated and re-organized the list of acceptable native trees and shrubs
- Enhanced Best Management Practices and guidance for planting native grasses and herbaceous plants
- Revised the native seed mix to include recommendations for attracting native pollinators and/or game and wildlife species
- Added new guidance regarding the planting of Norway spruce when used to compensate for the loss of eastern hemlock

Appendix C. Non-Native Invasive Plant Management

- Updated Best Management Practices for prevention, monitoring and management of invasive plants based on Bureau monitoring data and lessons learned from field projects and research
- Increased emphasis regarding prevention Best Management Practices
- Added Early Detection Rapid Response protocols
- Recommended approach for pre-construction and post-construction monitoring
- Increased emphasis and explanation regarding invasive plant prioritization
- Updated invasive plant provisions for Lease/Surface Use Agreements
- Updated invasive plant provisions for License for Right-of-Way Agreements

Appendix D. Site Rehabilitation

- Clarified the Bureau’s descriptions of the terms site rehabilitation, revegetation, reclamation and restoration.
- Refined information regarding the establishment of goals and objectives for each type of site rehabilitation project
- Included new additional ecological considerations
- Revised and added considerations for wildlife habitat structures and specific species

Appendix E. Emergency Contact Information

- Updated emergency contact numbers for operators

Appendix F. Glossary

- Developed a comprehensive list of terms utilized in the Guidelines for Administering Oil and Gas Activity on State Forest Lands