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## **Pennsylvania Auditor General issues stern critique of Department of Environmental Protection's handling of natural gas industry**

*Benefits of shale gas drilling “cannot come at the expense of the public's trust, health and wellbeing.”*

(Harrisburg – July 22, 2014) – Today, state Auditor General Eugene DePasquale released his report on the Special Performance Audit, conducted by the Department of the Auditor General, of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The audit made clear that DEP is falling well short in its regulatory oversight of the shale gas industry.

**“While we commend the employees at DEP for their ongoing efforts to address the environmental impacts of Pennsylvania's natural gas drilling boom, it's clear that the Department is not keeping up with its statutory role,”** said John Norbeck, vice president and chief operating officer of PennFuture. “The Auditor General noted in his report eight key findings that outlined, among other concerns, the Department's failure to issue administrative orders when violations occurred, effectively allowing the industry to police itself. Further, the report noted that the Department had no clear inspection schedule for gas wells, and evidenced a startling lack of transparency and accountability. **When our citizens have greater access to information about kennel inspections and restaurant inspections than they do natural gas well inspections, we have a problem.”**

The Auditor General indicated that while DEP disagreed with all of its findings, the Department was willing to accept a majority of its recommendations. He also indicated that while there have been improvements since the audit began in 2013, the “telltale sign” of the audit's success would be the implementation of its 29 recommendations.

“DEP is severely underfunded and understaffed at a time when the natural gas industry in Pennsylvania is experiencing substantial growth,” continued Norbeck. **“The Corbett administration should be increasing agency staffing, not decreasing it, and ensuring that DEP employees have the necessary tools to do their jobs. Anything less is a failure of leadership. We are again issuing the call for a drilling tax that will allow for rigorous monitoring of the natural gas industry as it makes drillers more accountable for the inevitable environmental damage that will result from this industrial activity.”**

The Special Performance Audit concluded that DEP needs to put in place the controls and infrastructure required to address the shale gas boom.

**“This report could not be clearer: DEP needs additional funding, more cops on the beat, and a robust monitoring system,”** said Norbeck. “While other gas drilling states are pursuing world-class inspection standards, Pennsylvania is falling short. We can ill afford to let another extractive industry run roughshod over the Commonwealth. We cannot repeat the mistakes of the past, mistakes for which we are still paying dearly.”



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PennFuture is a statewide public interest membership organization founded in 1998 with offices in Harrisburg, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and Wilkes-Barre. The organization's activities include litigating cases before regulatory bodies and in local, state, and federal courts; advocating and advancing legislative action on a state and federal level; public education; and assisting citizens in public advocacy.