**DEP PROPOSES NEW RULES FOR SHALE INDUSTRY**

A state proposal to make far-reaching amendments to oil and gas regulations governing Marcellus Shale gas development indicates stronger rules are needed to protect Pennsylvania’s surface and groundwater resources.

There are more than 100 proposed changes in a 23-page draft “concept paper” from the state Department of Environmental Protection issued in August.

The document is the first step in a regulatory rewrite, required b last year’s Act 13 amendments to the state’s 1984 Oil and Gas Act, and was circulated to the DEP’s Oil and Gas Technical Advisory Board. Still to be completed is regulatory language based on the proposals.

There’s a lot of work to do, and we’re just starting to review it,” said Burt Waite, a member of the technical advisory board since 1996. “The changes are to address Marcellus Shale drilling operations and the shortcomings of the present regulations. Things are being tightened up, and that’s appropriate.”

Mr. Waite said the proposed regulatory changes are “comprehensive and potentially the biggest” since the enactment of the state Oil and Gas Act in 1984.

Among the more notable proposals in the concept paper is the elimination of the drilling industry’s use of in-ground pits for storage of “produced fluids,” which are briny liquids that flow back to the surface after a well has been hydraulically fractured, and a requirement to locate and map abandoned gas and oil wells near new will sites that could allow methane to migrate into shallow aquifers.

Other proposals would require drillers to build secondary containment structures around all new permanent storage tanks to protect nearby waterways and regulate on-site wastewater treatment processes and pipelines for the first time.

(By Don Hopey/Pittsburgh Post-Gazette/August 28, 2012)