

Supplemental Findings Statement

Pursuant to the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR) of the Environmental Conservation Law (ECL) and the SEQR Regulations 6NYCRR Part 617, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation makes the following supplemental findings on the Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) on the Oil, Gas and Solution Mining Regulatory Program.

Name of Action

Adoption of supplemental findings on leasing of state lands for activities regulated under the Oil, Gas and Solution Mining Law (ECL Article 23).

Description and Background

In early 1988, the Department of Environmental Conservation released the Draft GEIS on the Oil, Gas and Solution Mining Regulatory Program. The Draft GEIS comprehensively reviewed the environmental impacts of the Department's program for regulating the siting, drilling, production and plugging and abandonment of oil, gas, underground gas storage, solution mining, brine disposal, geothermal and stratigraphic test wells. The findings statement issued on the Draft and Final GEIS in September, 1992 neglected to specifically mention DEC's program for leasing of State lands for these resource development activities.

Prior to adoption of the GEIS, proposed lease sales underwent a segmented review. Segmented reviews are permitted under certain circumstances if they are no less protective of the environment. This is true given the highly speculative nature of oil and gas leasing practices:

- It is impractical to review the potential environmental impacts of development activities at the leasing stage. Information on the placement of well sites is not generally known, even by the lessee. Not until a company successfully obtains a lease does it invest time and money in preparing the exploration and development plans that will be submitted to the Department for approval if the lessee wishes to commence operations.
- Most of the land leased will never be directly affected by development activities. Based on a 15 year record of the State's leasing program, less than one percent of all the State land leased has been subject to any direct impact.
- When the lessee does decide on a proposed well site on a State lease, the lessee must obtain a site-specific drilling permit from the Department. With every well drilling permit application the Department requires: 1) a program-specific Environmental Assessment Form, 2) a plat (map) showing the proposed well location and support facilities, and 3) a pre-drilling site inspection that allows the Department to :
 - reliably determine potential environmental problems; and

- select appropriate permit conditions for mitigating potential environmental impacts.

- Possession of a lease does not a priori grant the right to drill on a lease. Nor is the lessee in any way guaranteed approval for their first-choice drilling location. Clauses included in the lease inform the lessee that any surface disturbing activities must receive Department review and approval prior to their commencement. Leases also contain clauses recommended by other State agency staff that are necessary for protection of fish, wildlife, plant, land, air, wetlands, water and cultural resources on the leased parcels.

SEOR Determination of Significance

The Department has determined that the act of leasing State lands for activities regulated under ECL Article 23 does not have a significant environmental impact. This determination is supported by the facts listed above.

SEOR Review Procedures

Department staff will no longer make Determinations of Significance and Negative or Positive Declarations under SEQR for leases on State lands for activities regulated under ECL Article 23 at the time that the lease is granted; SEQR reviews will continue to be done as needed for site-specific development.

