

Forest Service proceeding with leasing land

The U.S. Forest Service is going ahead on a proposal to lease a 101-acre tract of land in the Allegheny National Forest to Pennsylvania General Energy to drill six oil and gas wells in the Salmon Creek area of Forest County.

The original proposal hit a roadblock when the Allegheny Defense Project claimed the proposal violated the National Environmental Policy Act since the Forest Service relied on an outdated 1981 environmental assessment to approve the lease, according to a release from the ADP.

The Forest Service is now proposing to lease the federal minerals to PGE

pursuant to Section 390 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which gives oil and gas activities exemptions from NEPA.

“If there was any doubt the Forest Service is beholden to the oil and gas industry in the Allegheny, this decision removes that doubt,” said Ryan Talbott, forest watch coordinator for the ADP. “The Forest Service knew that if it continued with the original lease proposal, it would have to complete an updated environmental analysis. Instead of doing the right thing and conducting an updated analysis, the Forest Service found a way to avoid the analysis altogether through the Energy Policy Act.”