

Oil and Gas Drilling in the Allegheny National Forest

The Allegheny National Forest was established in 1923. At that time, the U.S. Forest Service made a conscious decision not to purchase the mineral rights below the surface. This decision was repeated in the 1986 management plan which continues to guide management of the Allegheny. The result is that while the Forest Service owns the surface, private interests (predominantly oil and gas corporations) control 93% of the mineral rights. This has resulted in widespread oil and gas drilling in the Allegheny National Forest which has spiked over the last five years.

Fiscal Year	oil and gas wells drilled	oil and gas well objections filed
1986	250	0
1987	250	0
1988	196	0
1989	139	0
1990	139	0
1991	176	0
1992	160	0
1993	188	0
1994	112	0
1995	109	0
1996	68	0
1997	102	0
1998	199	0
1999	275	0
2000	345	0
2001	315	0

Sources

U.S. Forest Service:
Monitoring & Evaluation Reports, 1986-99
Personal Communication (L. Houston)
Robert T. Jacobs: Sept. 13, 2001

In 1984, the Pennsylvania Governor signed into law the Pennsylvania Oil and Gas Act. This law gives the surface owner the right to object to the location of oil and gas wells. Objections can be raised due to potential impacts to endangered species, drinking water supplies, and publicly owned forests. The American public owns the surface lands in the Allegheny National Forest. The U.S. Forest Service is the federal agency mandated with protecting and conserving those lands. This chart is an indication of how the Forest Service has handled that responsibility when it comes to oil and gas drilling.

