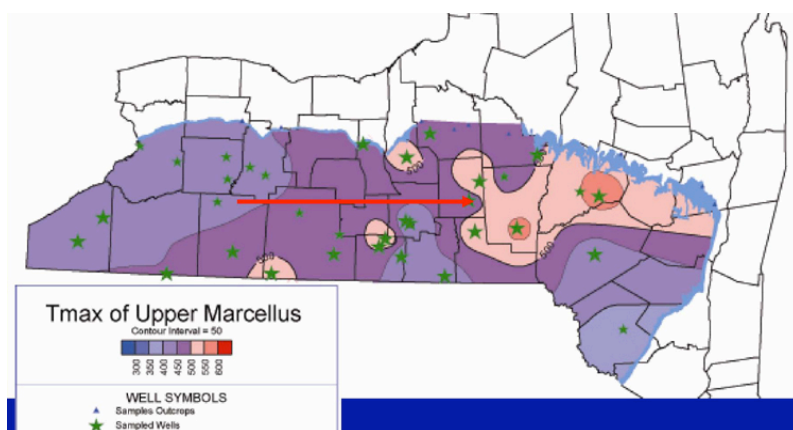


Protect New York from Horizontal Hydrofracking



What is Marcellus Shale?

Marcellus Shale is a methane-rich rock formation that lies 6,000 to 9,000 feet below the Catskill Mountains, the Delaware River Valley, the Allegheny Plateau, to beyond the shores of Lake Erie, spanning 28 New York Counties. Limited technology and market forces have severely limited its extraction until now.

Recent advances in horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing combined with soaring energy prices have brought much industry focus to New York State with tens of thousands of acres of gas leases already purchased. Much of upstate New York could be transformed into an industrial grid work of gas fields and pipelines.

Hydraulic Fracturing Presents Substantially Harmful Impacts to Upstate New York.

Hydraulic fracturing or “fracking” involves injecting water, sand, and chemical additives into shale at extremely high pressure, separating rock fissures and allowing the gas to flow out the drill bore while the sand holds the cracks open. Because Marcellus shale formations are so deep, millions of gallons of water are required and subsequently millions of gallons of contaminated water are produced.

3-9 million gallons of water are required to fracture a well and a single well may be fractured up to 18 times. Each fracking episode entails 600-800 truck trips to deliver water to the well pad, as well as several hundred trips to haul away contaminated “produced water”. Much of this contamination comes from naturally occurring chlorides, heavy metals and radioactivity previously locked in the shale. But the “produced” water also includes fracking fluids - tens of thousands of gallons of industrial chemicals whose exact composition remains uncertain and held as a trade secret. Recent disclosures to NYS have revealed 260 separate chemicals in frack fluid including benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, and xylene, endocrine disruptors that are dangerous even in small quantities.

Accidents Happen

In spite of assurances of drilling’s safety from the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), occurrences of groundwater contamination are mounting. Recent Marcellus shale drilling in Dimock, Pennsylvania resulted in 9 contaminated private drinking water wells. In 2007, the drilling of a single gas well in North Brookfield, NY blew out at least 11 drinking water wells. From 1983 to 2008, the Chautauqua County Dept of Health documented more than 120 cases of ground water contamination from natural gas wells. The DEC would not officially substantiate these claims because there was no pre-testing of water to establish correlation. To date, The DEC has never provided conclusive proof that hydraulic fracturing is safe, nor can they produce any evidence of ground water monitoring for natural gas well in NYS. Thousands of spills, explosions, fires, and illegal releases have been documented in NY, though fines and enforcement actions are rare.

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Oil and Gas Interests Should Not Come Before Community Interests

Currently, NY's Environmental Conservation Law supersedes all local ordinances. An oil or gas well can be sited anywhere without local oversight, regardless of how incompatible it is with established zoning, so long as the well is in compliance with statewide setbacks and spacing requirements. NY communities in drilling districts cannot enforce zoning, noise ordinances, moratoriums or other planning measures deemed necessary to protect unique local assets.

New York is Unprepared to Move Forward

The 809-page draft Supplemental GEIS on the Oil, Gas, and Solution Mining Regulatory program is an incomplete study with many key omissions. Contrary to their obligation under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), the DEC has rejected its obligation to conduct comprehensive cumulative analysis, refused to revisit the original and out dated GEIS, and will not analyze critical staffing shortages and gaps in protective infrastructure. Without studying the "big picture" of how thousands of wells and associated pipelines will collectively impact our natural and community resources we will not be able to plan for the ultimate negative outcomes of drilling. The Atlantic Chapter calls for the withdrawal of the dSGEIS until it can produce a draft compliant with SEQRA.

New York Lacks Basic Infrastructure to Treat Wastes

Of the 134 waste water pre-treatment plants in the state only three accept waste "flow back" water and in a limited capacity. There are no new industrial wastewater treatment plants proposed to take these wastes, yet drill permit applications are mounting. Failure to address this issue will lead to illegal releases and exported wastes to Pennsylvania and Ohio, states struggling with their own wastewater issues.

A New Glut of Gas Will Undermine Efficiency and Renewable Energy Programs

The Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter actively supports activities and policies that promote energy efficiency, conservation, and the use of renewable resources, such as wind, solar, and geothermal. An increase in natural gas production will delay the adoption of efficiency programs and the implementation of low carbon energy projects. The public will have little economic incentive to invest in the clean energy economy if the low price of natural gas acts as a barrier.

The Chapter opposes unconventional gas extraction practices in New York State as it is now practiced, and as it is proposed in the dSGEIS, because such practices and proposals:

- endanger water supplies and critical watersheds;
- imperil human health;
- seriously damage important wild land resources;
- significantly increase habitat fragmentation;
- use fracking fluids that pose unacceptable toxic risks;
- do not disclose the identity and volume of fracking fluids;
- do not properly treat, manage, and account for fracking fluids, drilling muds, and wastewater;
- do not adequately protect drinking water aquifers and surface waters from contamination; and
- will cause violations of air quality standards, individually and cumulatively

For more information please contact:

Roger Downs

Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter

353 Hamilton Street Albany, NY 12210

(518) 426-9144

roger.downs@sierraclub.org