

Act Now or Lose Allegany as We Know It.

Larry Beahan July 2009

Lovers off Allegany State Park, disaster is upon us. The mineral rights under half the Park are not state-owned. Albany has been repeatedly urged to buy them. Now the rogue oil exploration company, US Energy, of Amherst NY, claims title to 3000 acres and intends to turn Allegany into the oil field it was 100 years ago. Imagine Allegany's 100 to 350-year-old forest chewed up by oil roads and rumbling trucks. Imagine oil wells clunking in the hills. Imagine Red House Creek and the Park's drinking water with an iridescent oil slick.

Shreiner Oil and Gas has already contaminated the water wells on Hedgehog Lane in Bradford, PA a couple miles south, and are "hydro-fracing" oil wells there (the environmentally questionable practice of fracturing petroleum-bearing shale by driving tons of water down a well). US Energy, claiming mineral-rights ownership, is cutting timber and driving holes in the floor of the 8000-acre forest which is Bradford's "watershed."

On July 10, 2009 the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection ordered U.S. Energy to cease all gas and oil exploration in Pennsylvania, for "persistent and repeated violations of environmental laws... the consequences being the contamination of water and soil in Warren and McKean Counties." Friends of Allegany, our worst nightmare is here. These pirates, U.S. Energy, have made application to drill 5 oil wells just north of the Pennsylvania border in the venerable Quaker Run half of New York State's Allegany State Park.

Park Authorities and the Department of Environmental Conservation assure us that they will force U.S. Energy to prove ownership of this first 3000 acres and any other, they try to access. Each agency will require a permit. US Energy must do a full Environmental Impact Study and Review under the State Environmental Quality Review Act.. The agencies promise to demand the highest level of protection of surface rights. The Adirondack Mountain Club has appealed to the State Attorney General to review U.S. Energy's claims. But all this may not be enough to preserve Allegany's magnificent forest, intact.

Allegany State Park should not be sacrificed to a short term greedy petroleum fix. Its rocky headwater streams, eight old growth forests sites, ancient hilltop fortress, several Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species, 361 varieties of mammals, reptiles, amphibians and fish and its million and a half human visitors each year deserve better.

New York State must save Allegany from this petroleum monster by: 1. Eminent Domain to acquire all its mineral rights. 2. Protecting it under the State Natural and Historic Preservation Trust, Article 20 of the Park Law. 3. Enacting Sam Hoyt's bill, Assembly 9070, which sunsets unused Allegany mineral rights after 20 years. Contact the Governor, the Legislature, the DEC and Parks... or lose Allegany.