

**Gas Drilling in the NYC Watershed
or
Would You Like Some Poison in Your Drinking Water?
Borough President Scott Stringer Leads the Battle to “Kill the Drill”**

Borough President Scott Stringer, along with elected officials - Congressman Jerrold Nadler, State Senators Tom Duane and Eric Schneiderman, State Assembly members Linda Rosenthal and Danny O'Donnell, City Councilmember Gale Brewer and environmental advocates - called for the state to ban drilling for natural gas near the city's water source because the proposed buffer zones around the watershed are inadequate to protect the watershed from contamination. But that is not enough.

On April 7, 2009 Community Board 7 (CB7) urged Governor Paterson and the NYS DEC to ban hydro-fracing drilling in the Delaware/Catskills Watershed and in aquifers and watersheds elsewhere in New York State. The Coalition for a Livable West Side fully supports CB7's position. It is not enough to protect just NYC's watershed. If it's not safe in the watershed which supplies NYC's water, it is not safe for anyone else's water supply .

The Issue – The Safety of New York City's Drinking Water:

The entire West-of-Hudson portion of the New York City Watershed (which supplies 90% of drinking water to more than 50% of the state's population) sits on top of part of the Marcellus Shale, a large mineral reserve deposit 6,000 - 10,000 feet beneath the earth's surface that oil and gas companies want to drill into.

If the NYC Watershed which supplies unfiltered drinking water to more than 9 million New Yorkers becomes polluted from the hydro-fracing process, NYC would have to build a filtration plant that could cost taxpayers more than 10 billion dollars.

Prohibiting drilling in just the NYC watershed area would only put a relatively small portion (8%) of New York's Marcellus Shale off limits to industrial drilling. But the water supply of the entire state must be protected from this process of hydro-fracing. Rivers in Wyoming were contaminated by hydro-fracing operations 28 miles away from the drilling site through underground fractures in the geological formations. (see paragraph 4 on P.4 for other damning evidence from ([EPA's 2004 report](#))).

Drilling companies have already leased tens of thousands of acres. Fortuna Energy and Chesapeake Energy offered at least \$5,500 per acre, plus 20 percent royalties, to a group of 600 property owners - for a total of 35,000 acres - on the New York and Pennsylvania sides of the Marcellus Shale.

News flash: “Bowling to intense public pressure, Chesapeake Energy Corporation, the largest leaseholder in the Marcellus Shale, will not drill for natural gas within the upstate New York watershed.” NY Times. October 28, 2009.

Industry Claims and the Truth

INDUSTRY: “[Industry representatives maintain that the drilling fluids are mostly made up of non-toxic, even edible substances, and that when chemicals are used, they are just a tiny fraction of the overall mix.](#)”

TRUTH: “To extract natural gas from the mineral reserve, oil companies plan to use a process [called “hydraulic fracturing”](#) using technologies developed by Halliburton. The new gas drilling technology involves blasting millions of gallons of so-called slick water into the shale bed to break up the stone and release the trapped gas. Slick water is a cocktail of water, sand and as many as 278 toxic chemicals. Many of these, like benzene, naphthalene and chromium, are either carcinogenic or associated with numerous health problems affecting the eyes, skin, lungs, intestines, liver, brain and nervous system.”

NYSDEC: “New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) maintains that New York City’s watershed will be protected. It also told state legislators that [hydraulic fracturing was safe.](#)”

TRUTH: “DEC stated that hydraulic fracturing was safe, even though [the agency had not studied or discussed](#) the sometimes dangerous chemicals that it uses and that later wind up in its waste”. “[As much as a third of injected fluids used in hydraulic fracturing](#) remains in the ground and benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, and xylenes in the water will likely be [transported by groundwater](#) flowing according to regional hydraulic gradients.”

INDUSTRY: “Mike John of Chesapeake Energy reported that of the fracturing fluid used, most is water and sand and, [“just under 1 percent is a mixture of other chemicals”](#).”

TRUTH: “Large amounts of chemicals are used for each fracturing. Hydraulic fracturing requires millions of gallons of water. For a 3 million gallon fracturing, Chesapeake’s figures would mean [30,000 gallons of toxic materials are being injected](#) into the ground.”

INDUSTRY : “[Our drinking water is not at risk](#) from hydraulic fracturing because industry is fracturing at depths below the aquifers from which our communities are locating water wells.”

TRUTH: “There are number of ways in which [hydraulic fracturing threatens our drinking water](#). As the few studies that are available have shown that at least 20-30% of fracturing fluids may remain trapped underground.”

INDUSTRY: “The practice of hydraulic fracturing and creating underground fractures is [well-tested, controllable and safe.](#)”

TRUTH: “It is critical for communities and decision makers to understand that hydraulic fracturing fluids not only contain toxic chemicals, but this operation utilizes high volumes of fluids and high pressures to intentionally open up underground pathways for gas or oil to flow. Injected fluids have been known to travel as far as 3,000 feet from a well, and fracturing fluids may remain trapped underground. [Computer models have shown that fractures can behave differently than predicted.](#)”

NYSDEC: “DEC states that hydraulic fracturing is safe.”

TRUTH: “[In addition to toxic water](#) and groundwater pollution, hydraulic fracturing causes toxic air pollution...At each stage of production and delivery, tons of toxic volatile compounds, including benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, xylene, etc., and fugitive natural gas

(methane), escape and mix with nitrogen oxides from the exhaust of diesel-driven, mobile and stationary equipment to produce ground-level ozone.”

NYSDEC: “DEC said drillers would have to [ship the wastewater](#) to neighboring Pennsylvania.”

TRUTH: “ProPublica found that Pennsylvania’s specialized treatment plants [don’t have the capacity for the waste.](#)”

EPA: [A 2004 US Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\) study](#) “concluded that hydraulic fracturing posed “no threat” to underground drinking water because fracturing fluids aren’t necessarily hazardous, can’t travel far underground, and that there is “no unequivocal evidence” of a health risk.”

TRUTH: “[Buried deep within the EPA report](#) are statements explaining that fluids migrated unpredictably -- through different rock layers, and to greater distances than previously thought -- in as many as half the cases studied in the United States. The EPA identified some of the chemicals as biocides and lubricants that “can cause kidney, liver, heart, blood, and brain damage through prolonged or repeated exposure.” It found that as much as a third of injected fluids, benzene in particular, remains in the ground after drilling and is “likely to be transported by groundwater.”

Questions for DEC

1. How will the waste fluids and gas drilling “sludge,” laced with heavy metals, chemicals, etc. be disposed of?
2. Where will the vast amounts of water needed for fracturing come from?
3. How many inspectors will be required to monitor the planned hundreds, if not thousands, of sites to ensure compliance? DEC presently has 17 inspectors to monitor compliance.
4. The Environmental Conservation Law, §23-0303, provides for the superseding of all local laws or ordinances relating to the regulation of the oil, gas and solution mining industries. How can that provision be changed so that localities can protect its citizens?

The article above is from: The Fall 2009 Coalition for a Livable West Side Newsletter