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Day 1 of EPA meeting served its point, officials say

BY JON CAMPBELL • JCAMPBELL1@GANNETT.COM • SEPTEMBER 14, 2010, 7:25 PM

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BINGHAMTON -- About 200 people spoke Monday during the first day of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's final public meeting on its hydraulic fracturing study, but did the agency get the feedback it desired?

An [EPA](#) official said Tuesday it did.

The Binghamton meeting marks the last of four across the country meant to solicit input on the scope of EPA's multi-million-dollar study, which is to take a look at the potential relationship between groundwater and hydrofracking, a [natural gas](#) drilling technique.

"One of the things I try to emphasize in my opening presentation is the kind of information we would like to get from people for the study," said Ann Codrington, acting director of the EPA's Drinking Water Protection Division. "I was [happy](#) to hear a fair number of people respond directly to the questions I asked. People did do what I asked them to do, so that was great."

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Still, many speakers used the opportunity to make passionate pleas for or against the hydrofracking process, an issue that has divided much of the Southern Tier for the better part of three years.

Others took the opportunity to elaborate on exactly what the EPA should study.

"I think there are a number of different perspectives," said Codrington, who sat on a panel for all of the EPA's fracking meetings. "One was that the study should focus on drinking water. Another was the study should cover the entire process from the very beginning, including trucking

into the facility, to the very end, including waste disposal. Those are two things that I heard over and over and over again."

Yvette Akel, a Town of Binghamton resident who spoke against fracking during the Monday afternoon session, said she hopes the agency is listening intently to the public's input.

"I hope they were listening, because it was such a struggle to get it here," Akel said. "I hope they didn't just tune us out after a certain point, because if they did, what's the point of even having the hearing?"

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