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Environmentalists: Revise Gas Drilling Review? Nope – Repeal It!



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From page 194 of the environmental review: "These photos show a hydraulic fracturing operation at a Fortuna Energy multiwell site in Troy, PA"

There's nearly a month left in a public comment period for an environmental review of natural gas drilling in New York, but environmentalists have gone beyond requesting changes to the document—they're asking that it be repealed all together.

Catskill Mountainkeeper, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and a coalition of 26 environmental organizations have teamed up and asked Gov. David Paterson to repeal the Department of Environmental Conservation's draft environmental review. (You can see the letter, sent yesterday, [here](#) [1] and our story about the DEC review [here](#) [2]). They're especially concerned about the environmental damage that might be caused by the drilling process known as [hydraulic fracturing](#) [3], which uses a mixture of water, sand and chemicals to extract deeply buried gas deposits.

“This is not a purely theoretical risk. The use of hydraulic fracturing has led to known or suspected contamination in water supplies across the country, including right next door in Pennsylvania,” the letter reads.

The 800-plus page draft review examines the effects of drilling in the Marcellus Shale, which stretches beneath New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia. Drilling in New York’s portion of the Marcellus has been on hold pending the review, but environmentalists say the draft raises more questions than it answers. In its letter to Paterson, the coalition says the review fails to address the cumulative impacts of drilling, include a meaningful assessment of alternatives, consider the possibility of contamination of drinking water supplies, and fully assess the potential for air quality, traffic and noise impacts.

The group is asking Paterson to tell DEC to set aside the review, put a 12-month moratorium on issuing new drilling permits, and work with experts from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to create a new environmental impact statement.

“In sum, we believe that how you handle this issue will largely determine the environmental and public health legacy of your first Administration,” the letter to Paterson says. “We urge you in good faith—and with every hope of an environmentally sustainable and successful Paterson Administration—to provide the leadership this situation requires.”

Walter Hang, of the New York environmental database firm Toxics Targeting, began circulating a petition with similar requests about a month ago. So far, about 4,500 people have signed it.