

# Natural Gas Development in New York Setting the Record Straight

**Claim:** Water treatment plants cannot manage the influx of waste water from drilling.

**Fact:** New York's DEC will not authorize water treatment facilities to accept wastewater, regardless of source, without a determination the facility can safely treat the fluid and meet the requirements of discharge or disposal for which the plant is permitted. The DEC also will not issue a permit to drill until the applicant submits a plan to dispose of any flowback at an authorized treatment plant or disposal facility in accordance with all laws.

**Claim:** Hydraulic fracturing is exempt from the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA).

**Fact:** Hydraulic fracturing became commercially viable more than two decades before the SDWA was enacted in 1974. Because hydraulic fracturing is not a disposal operation, it was never intended to be included in the legislation. The Act was amended in 1980, 1986 and 1996, during which time hydraulic fracturing was never considered for additional federal regulation.

**Claim:** Hydraulic fracturing contaminates groundwater.

**Fact:** Despite more than one million instances of hydraulic fracturing, there are no cases of hydraulic fracturing causing fracturing fluids to come in contact with groundwater. Various federal and state environmental protection officials have spoken to this fact:

- ✓ Despite claims by environmental organizations, [EPA's Steve Heare] "hadn't seen any documented cases that the hydro-fracking process was contaminating water supplies."  
*Steve Heare, U.S. EPA, as quoted by Dow Jones Newswire, Feb. 16, 2010.*
- ✓ "It's our experience in Pennsylvania that we have not had one case in which the fluids used to break off the gas from 5,000 to 8,000 feet underground have returned to contaminate ground water."  
*John Hanger, Pa. DEP, as quoted by Reuters, Oct. 4, 2010.*
- ✓ "Just a note about fracking: First of all, it's standard operating procedure in Pennsylvania. And it's important to point out that we've never seen an impact to fresh groundwater directly from fracking."  
*Scott Perry, Pennsylvania. DEP, May 2010.*
- ✓ "No documented instances of groundwater contamination are recorded in the NYSDEC files from previous horizontal drilling or hydraulic fracturing projects in New York."  
*NY DEC's Draft SGEIS, Sept. 30, 2009.*

**Claim:** Hydraulic fracturing fluid is pumped into aquifers.

**Fact:** Multiple steel and cement well casings prevent seepage from the well bore into the freshwater aquifer. Upward migration from the deep target fracturing zone is prevented by impervious overlying geologic strata. Chemicals that remain in the shale bind to the rocks and are chemically altered. Fracturing is limited to the target formation.

**Claim:** Drilling rigs will scar the landscape.

**Fact:** The drilling process is temporary. After drilling and completion, the land is "reclaimed" with plantings, leaving an access road and a small wellsite pad for tanks and valves that connect the wellhead to underground pipelines.

Learn more about safe natural gas development at [www.iogany.org](http://www.iogany.org)



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**Claim:** Hydraulic fracturing ingredients are secret.

**Fact:** Chemicals used in the hydraulic fracturing process have been, and will continue to be, revealed. The DEC website ([www.dec.ny.gov](http://www.dec.ny.gov)) lists all of them, including ingredients no longer used to enhance well stimulation. Prior to receiving a permit, the operator is required to submit a completion plan to the DEC, including a list of the chemicals and concentrations to be used in the well completion.

**Claim:** DEC does not have the manpower to monitor drilling operations.

**Fact:** The NYSDEC will only issue the quantity of permits it can handle. Its ability to provide site inspections for drillers to proceed will naturally regulate the expected activity. Revenues from permitting could be adequate to support needed staff and offset related training and administrative costs.

**Claim:** Events in Dimock, Pennsylvania, will also occur in New York.

**Fact:** Events in Dimock are a result of operator error in the construction of a well casing, resulting in methane migration into home water wells. Hydraulic fracturing was not to blame. In addition, New York's well construction standards are more stringent than Pennsylvania's were at the time of the incident in Dimock.

**Claim:** Industry will deplete streams and lakes of fresh water.

**Fact:** Consumptive water withdrawal and usage is regulated and monitored by at least three interstate entities within New York: the Delaware River Basin Commission; the Susquehanna River Basin Commission; and the Great Lakes Commission. These agencies oversee fluid management guidelines and prevent the overuse of water through permitting processes.

**Claim:** Industry will irreparably damage roads.

**Fact:** Municipalities will work with industry to establish bonds ensuring repairs and upgrades take place. Road damage occurring in other states is temporary and operators are working year-round to maintain, enhance or repair roadways.

**Claim:** Drilling will occur in the New York City Watershed.

**Fact:** In 2010, the DEC ordered the New York City and Skaneateles watersheds to undergo additional and more stringent permitting standards beyond the scope of the SGEIS because these areas are unfiltered water sources. These additional requirements make it highly unlikely that horizontal drilling with high volume hydraulic fracturing will occur in these watersheds.

On Dec. 30, 2009, New York's commissioner of environmental conservation clarified the facts associated with inaccurate claims made by environmental activist Walter Hang in a report titled, "Natural gas quest: state files show 270 gas drilling accidents in the past 30 years." The DEC commissioner concluded the following:

- ✓ Of the 270 incidents, 10 occurred during a drilling process. Seven of these were gas drilling sites;
- ✓ Only 44 incidents occurred at natural gas well sites (after drilling and stimulation was completed);
- ✓ 53 of the 270 incidents were unrelated to oil or gas drilling;
- ✓ Only one of the nine reported incidents relating to oil or gas drilling involved methane migration and home evacuation;
- ✓ Over the same period, 10,400 wells regulated by state Environmental Conservation Law were drilled.

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