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Larry Beahan: Review of EIS shows that fracking remains dangerous

By Larry Beahan

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What the heck is a SDGEIS or a DGEIS or a GEIS or even a plain EIS? And what can we do with one?

If you have been following the news in New York State, these questions must have popped into your head. You may suspect that SDGEIS has something to do with tapping the supposed bonanza of gas a few miles below us in something called the Marcellus Shale, and that this is done by a process called hydrofracking, and that hydrofracking may make some of us rich and may also poison our drinking water and pollute the air we breathe.

The SDGEIS comes out of a state law that requires an EIS, or Environmental Impact Statement. An EIS must be

done whenever anyone proposes an action that is likely to harm our environment — that is, the air, earth and water we live in and on, and on which our lives depend. A generic— or “G” EIS— is allowed in certain cases where the same action may be repeated many times, as in gas-well drilling. The “S” and “D” stand for supplemental and draft, depending on which stage of review we are at.

The SDGEIS is the ultimate version of an EIS. The State Department of Environmental Conservation published the current hydrofracking SDGEIS in September. Now we, the folks who live in the environment that is proposed to be “impacted” by this new form of gas-well drilling, have until Dec. 12 to say whether its 1,100 pages protect us adequately.

After the DEC considers our comments on this document, it will publish the “F” for final, FDGEIS. In the FDGEIS, the DEC will either ban hydrofracking as too destructive or permit it with mitigation.

The 1,100-page SDGEIS is a tough read. Environmental experts have looked it over and concluded:

- The DEC has listened to previous comments. This version is better, but it still does not do the job.
- Its sole focus is on the impact of the individual well pad. There is no sense of how air quality, ecosystems and community infrastructure will be affected, how millions of gallons of frack fluid would be treated or how much sensitive habitat and biodiversity we will lose as a result of the fragmentation coming from a full build-out of pipelines and thousands of well pads.
- There is no public health assessment.
- If hydrofracking is too dangerous to allow in the New York City and Syracuse watersheds, why is it safe for the rest of us?
- It does not ban disposal of toxic fracking wastes in municipal waste water systems.
- The DEC does not have the staff or the funding to supervise this proposed massive assault on our environment.

Find more details, including relatively painless ways to make your voice heard, at [www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=2011_SGEIS_Flaws\(NY\)](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=2011_SGEIS_Flaws(NY))

Larry Beahan is conservation chairman of the Sierra Club Niagara Group.