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Another Voice / Gas drilling

Robert M. Ciesielski: Hydrofracking endangers our health, drinking water

By **Robert M. Ciesielski**

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The editorial stance of The News that hydrofracking and horizontal drilling for natural gas in New York State is a foregone conclusion is erroneous. The statements in the Oct. 22 editorial are an echo of industry propaganda.

The News correctly states that the disposal of fracking wastewater is a serious problem. The editorial implies that Pennsylvania has solved this problem by imposing "strict rules to put an end to inadequately treated wastewater discharges."

What Pennsylvania has in fact done has banned the acceptance of fracking waste at all of its wastewater treatment plants after it was discovered that proper treatment was impossible. The gas industry now incredulously claims that it will treat its own waste. This is from an industry that continually states that the waste is safe.

More than 250 New York physicians and pediatricians have written to Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo stating that the drilling practice and disposal of waste is a serious danger to our health and drinking water. Studies show that more than one-third of the chemicals used by the industry can affect the endocrine system. Endocrine disrupters can damage hormones and reproductive and immune systems in parts as little as one billion to one trillion.

The proposed drilling regulations for New York exempt the New York City and

Syracuse watersheds from horizontal drilling, an admission of the danger of the new drilling process. In the past two weeks, Albany and Syracuse have banned horizontal drilling in their cities and the acceptance of frack wastewater.

As far as the statement that drilling will provide us with necessary energy and jobs, The News ignores what alternative clean energy is already doing throughout the world. Germany now produces 20 percent of its electricity from wind, solar and other energy sources, with a goal of 35 percent by 2020. Clean energy production has created 370,000 jobs for its citizens.

Ontario, Canada, which adopted a feed-in-tariff in 2009, has created 20,000 clean energy jobs in two years, and expects 50,000 by next year. Compare this to the gas industry's estimate of some 25,000 eventual jobs in New York from the dangerous practice of horizontal drilling.

The oil and gas industries want to maintain their stranglehold on energy profits and political power in the United States. They spend unbelievable amounts on lobbying, political contributions, advertising and the dissemination of misleading information concerning energy and global climate change. Instead of buying into petroleum gas industry propaganda, the media have an obligation to investigate and present an accurate picture.

Comments may be made to the State Department of Environmental Conservation and the governor concerning proposed high-volume horizontal gas drilling in New York State through Dec. 12.

Robert M. Ciesielski is chairman of the Sierra Club, Niagara Group.

Comments

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The Sierra club is correct on this. If carbon based fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas weren't so heavily subsidized by the US government, renewables would be a lot more cost competitive. Hydrofrackers have a woeful record of EPA violations. Terry Pagula's, East Energy had a incident rate of 1 per well per year. This is considered average for the industry. Multiply that by 10's of thousands of wells. And that is only the discovered / reported incidents. The Carbon-based fuel industry has a terrible track record of safety and environmental issues. This doesn't even take into the account the damage done to by the actual drilling process with 100's of thousands of acres of surface habitat destruction caused by well pads and dirt access roads. We must also consider the Haliburton Loophole which exempts Frackers from disclosing the ingredients of the frackign fluids. With this