

Lifton to DEC: Natural Gas Drilling Regs Fatally Flawed

Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton (D/WF-Tompkins/Cortland), announced today that she has submitted written testimony to the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) regarding the draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement (dSGEIS). When finalized, the SGEIS is intended to serve as an update and supplement to the state's 1992 Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) that applies to oil and gas drilling in New York State. The Supplemental addresses specific and unique issues related to horizontal drilling and high-volume hydrofracking that will be used in issuing well permits in the Marcellus Shale Formation.

"I have spent many, many hours on this critical issue since it first came to the forefront last year," Lifton said. "Large-scale natural gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale, including the controversial technique called hydrofracking, has the potential for changing our beautiful landscape and impacting our natural resources in unprecedented ways. It is incumbent upon us to take a good long look at the long-term cumulative effects and ensure that the state's regulations are comprehensive in scope and have the teeth necessary to protect the environment."

Lifton went on to say, "With the disturbing videos that have come out in the past couple of weeks, showing serious accidents, spills and contamination that have virtually destroyed both the homes and land of a number of New York families, we can no longer say drilling in New York is safe and well-regulated, as we have been assured by the DEC many times that it is. We have seen interviews with landowners who speak of the devastation, and, most troubling, the unresponsiveness of the DEC to their plight."

Lifton said that as a consequence of those testimonies, and her many other concerns, she reached the conclusion that New York's original GEIS on gas drilling is fatally flawed and urged the state to do a full review and revision of its foundational GEIS on gas drilling before proceeding further in this critical decision-making process.

The full text of the testimony submitted to DEC by Assemblywoman Lifton is attached.