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DEP Launches Comprehensive Marcellus Shale Web Feature on NYC.gov

Public Can Sign Up for Regular Gas Drilling Updates

Environmental Protection Commissioner Cas Holloway today launched an expanded Marcellus Shale web feature on DEP's website, which outlines in detail the basis for the City's position that natural gas drilling cannot be permitted in the upstate watersheds through a process known as hydraulic fracturing. The site contains a number of new tools, including a reader-friendly overview of Marcellus Shale with maps and photos of natural gas drilling; a new "Get Involved" page that will direct people to the appropriate State and Federal agencies and local elected officials to help them have their voices heard on the issue; and a "Stay Informed" page, which will enable interested members of the public to receive weekly updates on the most recent Marcellus Shale news. The information and interactive features can be viewed by visiting www.nyc.gov/dep.

"Nine million New Yorkers rely on more than one billion gallons of unfiltered drinking water that is delivered every day from New York City's upstate watersheds," said Commissioner Holloway. "Our obligation is to protect this irreplaceable resource, and this new web feature will be an invaluable tool for those who want to learn more about this critical issue, and assist in the effort to protect our pristine water supply."

Hydraulic fracturing — also known as hydrofracking — poses a significant risk to the quality of New York City's water supply. As part of the drilling process, millions of gallons of proprietary chemicals and pressurized water could be injected into thousands of gas wells throughout the State to break up and capture natural gas from a rock formation known as the Marcellus Shale. These chemicals could potentially contaminate New York City's drinking water, and the heavy industrialization that hydrofracking requires would result in millions of truck trips that could further impact the water supply. In addition to the risk to public health, gas drilling could also force the City to construct a filtration plant at a cost of \$10 billion to \$20 billion, which would translate into a minimum 30 percent increase in water rates.

MORE INFORMATION

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The State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) released a draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement to develop regulations on hydraulic fracturing in 2009 and is currently reviewing public comments. Recently, DEC announced that, at a minimum, any proposal to conduct hydrofracking in the watershed of an unfiltered water supply like New York City's would require a case-by-case environmental review. This is a step in the right direction, and the City expects that the State will ultimately agree with its conclusion that hydrofracking cannot safely be permitted in New York City's watersheds.

The website now offers an easy-to-read description of the Marcellus Shale and the process of hydraulic fracturing, and other background and scientific information, including a photo tour of a gas drilling website in Pennsylvania and maps which highlight where the Marcellus Shale is found and its proximity to New York City's watersheds. Members of the public interested in speaking out about the risks of gas drilling can find resources on how to contact local elected officials; the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which recently announced that they would study the risks of hydraulic fracturing in water supplies; and an email address for the EPA's "Eyes on Drilling" tipline, which was established to report non-emergency suspicious activity at oil and natural gas drilling sites. The public can also keep up to date on the most recent Marcellus Shale news by subscribing to DEP's new email distribution list. In addition to these features, the website also contains a running list of relevant news stories and reports about hydraulic fracturing and a page devoted to resources and links that contain additional information on the topic.

Watershed protection is considered the best way to maintain drinking water quality over the long term. DEP has spent more than \$1.5 billion to protect New York City's watershed by acquiring more than 108,000 acres of sensitive lands, upgrading existing upstate wastewater plants to the highest levels of treatment, building new upstate wastewater plants to address areas with substandard septic systems and working with farmers to reduce runoff from agricultural areas.

DEP manages the City's water supply, providing more than 1 billion gallons of water each day to more than 9 million residents, including 8 million in New York City, and residents of Ulster, Orange, Putnam and Westchester counties. DEP also manages storm water throughout the City, and ensures that the City's facilities comply with the Clean Water Act, and other federal, state and local rules and regulations.

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