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Marcellus Shale: Extending sGEIS comment period is polarizing and redundant

Written by Jennifer K. Levine on [August 25, 2011 – 4:46 am](#)

Advocates for drilling have recently become aware of a campaign led by drilling opponents to extend the sGEIS comment period from 60 to 180 days. After over three years of delay, revision, review, public comment and hearings ad nauseam, resulting in polarizing division, what can possibly be gained by further delaying the finalization of the DEC regulations on hydrofracking and horizontal drilling? The DEC and leaders at all levels of government in New York State have considered every bit of information. Over 14,000 New Yorkers have submitted comments. There is no new and relevant information out there that warrants consideration. We all know where we stand on this issue and few minds will be changed during an extended comment period.

A suspicious mind might think that this “delay” is merely a tactic by drilling opponents to prevent drilling entirely in New York. This tactic might work because with each delay, gas companies become less and less confident that permitting will ever happen and they allocate their resources to drilling friendly states. The landowners know this to be true as they have not seen the lease activity they hoped for this summer when the latest draft of the sGEIS was released in July with Commissioner Marten’s support. Gas companies are tentative about signing leases and New York is losing out on every level.

When the complete draft sGEIS is released in the coming weeks we can expect a surge in calls for delay, drilling bans and lawsuits. Further delay is redundant and unnecessary. Governor Cuomo and Commissioner Martens need to stand firm in their support of the DEC regulations. This is a critical moment for New York. Will we permit Marcellus development and the resulting prosperity for our struggling citizens or will we allow obstructionists to lead our state into deeper recession and continue New York’s population drain? The

obstructionists need to move aside and allow New York to finally move forward with safe, responsible drilling.

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