



Actor Mark Ruffalo speaks out against fracking in N.Y.
Photo: frackedagain

Cuomo will not rule out fracking, New Yorkers protest to protect clean water

November 14th, 2010 11:54 am ET

By **Carol Tang**, NY Energy Industry Examiner

It was a hot debate in New York politics during the midterm elections, and it has now become even more intense as governor-elect Andrew Cuomo prepares to take office.

Natural gas drilling in New York has been the subject of concern for the last few months. Although it provides a substantial source of energy, the process of obtaining the natural gas could potentially poison the state's entire water supply.

The process, known as hydraulic fracturing or more commonly as "fracking," requires drillers to pump a fluid and a propping material, like sand, down into the shale rock thousands of feet below the ground (near water pipelines) at high pressure to create fractures and release the natural gas. The fracturing fluid contains chemical compounds, which are added to make the process more effective. After the natural gas is removed from the wells, law requires that the fluid is removed, transported and disposed of properly. But at thousands of feet below the earth's surface, any slight complication could damage the process, release the chemicals and consequently contaminate the state's drinking water.

Cuomo says he would not rule out hydraulic fracturing because it has the potential to create jobs and provide an abundant source of energy, but he will not go forward unless he is positive there will not be any repercussions.

"We have a lot of emotion, but we don't have the facts. And I would not do anything until the facts are determined by bona fide studies," he said on the John Gambling Show for WOR News Talk Radio.

Those for natural gas drilling

The natural gas industry and the American Clean Skies Foundation, which supports natural gas, both say the process is not only safe, it is heralded by economists, academics and business leaders and is the future for clean energy.

The drilling rig is only used for about three to seven weeks per well and then replaced by a small wellhead, or what the industry calls a “Christmas tree,” according to the American Clean Skies Foundation. [Click here to go to its website.](#)

“Believe it or not, we will need natural gas to make a transition to renewables because it’s much cheaper to build a natural gas plant and have it stay idle,” Energy Secretary Steven Chu said during a speech about Energy and Climate Change at Georgetown University. “If you build a coal plant, if you build a nuclear plant, you want to run it 24/7,” he added. [Click here to see the full video.](#)

And those completely against it

But not everyone is as upbeat about natural gas drilling, especially New Yorkers who have been vehemently protesting against it. Actor Mark Ruffalo of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, supported a Fracking Awareness rally last week at the University of Albany. Ruffalo and his family moved from Hollywood to Sullivan County and noticed their neighbors leasing land to gas drilling companies. Ever since, he has been vocal against fracking.

“The basic, fundamental life source – water, which we all take for granted – is being ruined,” he said.

The toxic chemicals contained in the hydraulic fluid become radioactive if left underground, according to a study done by New York’s Department of Environmental Conservation. Scientists analyzed 13 samples of water brought to the surface and found that the levels of radium-226 were thousands of times the limit safe for consumption.

Activists have started a website to inform and encourage New Yorkers to take action against “fracking up” New York’s drinking water. [Click here to go to the website and watch an interview about the problems with fracking in New York.](#)

In the interview, Former Planning Manager and Owner of Onshore and Offshore Oil Rigs James Northrup, discusses multiple reasons against fracking in New York State. He says New York has seismic faulting and a large number of aquifers that overlay the Marcellus and Utica Shales. If the faults are fracked, it would allow the fracking fluid to seep into the aquifers and well water.

Marcellus Shale, the formation behind the dispute

The cause of the fracking debate is the Marcellus Shale, a black shale formation that extends deep

underground from Ohio and West Virginia northeast into Pennsylvania and southern New York. Beyond New York, protestors have been speaking out against fracking across the Northeast.

Geologists estimate that the entire Marcellus Shale contains between 168 to 516 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. New York uses about 1.1 trillion cubic feet of natural gas a year, according to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

The Marcellus Shale would potentially provide enough energy to last the state several years. It is not currently known how much gas will be drilled from New York, if drilling is approved. [Click here to see a map of the Marcellus Shale.](#)

Subscribe to my page: NY Energy News Examiner for the latest breaking energy news and exclusive interviews

Tags: [fracking](#), [Hydraulic Fracturing](#), [Andrew Cuomo](#), [natural Gas](#), [Energy](#), [Marcellus Shale](#)

More on Examiner.com



99%
relevant

[Penn State to Research Marcellus Shale Project](#)

Penn State University has established a new research center devoted to Marcellus Shale research. ...

[Read More](#)

[Parse.ly](#) [Powered](#) [Opt Out](#) [My Interest Profile](#)