

DEC challenged on gas drilling rules

Advocates say industry changes make 1992 rules inadequate

By BRIAN NEARING Staff writer

Published 12:05 a.m., Friday, May 6, 2011

CHERRY VALLEY -- Opponents of hydraulic fracturing for natural gas want the state Department of Environmental Conservation to adopt a more detailed level of environmental review for the limited use of the technique already allowed by the state.

The claim was made in legal papers filed Wednesday with the DEC by Advocates for Cherry Valley, an Otsego County environmental group. It focuses on the use of hydrofracking -- a high-pressure injection of a mix of chemicals, sand and water to break up underground formations of gas-bearing rock -- already used on vertical wells in Cherry Valley, an area north of Cooperstown.

DEC relies on a 1992 review on oil and gas drilling to allow vertical hydrofracking, which is much more limited than horizontal hydrofracking, in which multiple horizontal fractures are done from a single vertical well. Horizontal wells can cover much larger areas underground than vertical wells.

The horizontal technique, already in use in Pennsylvania and other states, has drawn widespread controversy in New York. Opponents claim it can endanger water supplies, while the industry claims it is safe.

DEC has studied creation of rules for horizontal hydrofracking for more than two years.

Peter Henner, a lawyer for Advocates for Cherry Valley, said the legal challenge maintains the 1992 review, used to form a generic environmental impact statement, is insufficient for modern hydrofracking.

"There is much more than what DEC considered when it wrote its statement in 1992. There are much more intense chemicals, a much more intense process," Henner said.

He wants to see DEC require detailed environmental review under the State Environmental Quality Review Act on individual vertical hydrofracking well applications, and to consider the accumulated impacts of vertical hydrofracked wells near each other.

An industry spokesman said vertical hydrofracking is a "well-understood technology that is appropriately regulated by DEC, has been in practice, even on home water wells, for decades in New York, and is validated by an outstanding record of safety and environmental protection."

Brad Gill, president of the Independent Oil and Gas Association of New York, called the challenge a "deliberate attempt to shut down an important industry."

A DEC spokeswoman said the agency had not received the challenge and declined comment.

Reach Nearing at 454-5094 or bnearing@timesunion.com.

Refinance Rates at 2.65%

\$160,000 Mortgage for \$659/mo. No SSN req. Free Quotes! (3.0%apr)
LendGo.com/Mortgage

Hot Stock Alert - GTSO

Profit From New Rare Earth Exporter! China Rare Earth Exports Up 171%
www.RareEarthExporters.com

Man "Cheats" Credit Score

He Added 126 Points To His Credit Score Using This 1 Easy Tip
www.CreditRepairFromHome.com

Ads by Yahoo!