

## News

### Steve Israel: Drilling timeline depends on DEC regs

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Published: 2:00 AM - 08/29/10

Moratorium or no moratorium, don't look for gas drilling to start in Sullivan County for at least a year from now — probably a lot longer.

Whether the Assembly and governor do what the state Senate just did and approve a moratorium on drilling permits until May, the state Department of Environmental Conservation won't be ready with new drilling regulations until at least then. Drilling of the gas-rich Marcellus shale can't start before that.

As state Sen. John Bonacic, R-Mount Hope, who voted for the moratorium, told the Record:

"The moratorium which will be enacted is for the amount of time the DEC tells me it will take to make science-based decisions — until May 2011."

DEC spokesman Yancey Roy wouldn't comment on any timeline, except to say, "We're taking whatever time is needed." Once those new drilling regulations are ready, it will take at least a month for them to be adopted — although it could take longer.

But with several environmental groups already saying they would file lawsuits to challenge those regulations, look for drilling to be delayed well past next summer.

With a new Legislature and governor by then, who knows when drilling the gas-rich Marcellus shale could actually begin? All of which is why that moratorium — a political victory for environmental groups — may have passed so overwhelmingly. The DEC timeline gave wavering lawmakers the political cover to vote for a delay that may have happened anyway, moratorium or no moratorium.

That moratorium won't be approved without the ultimate say-so of Gov. David Paterson, after an Assembly vote, perhaps as early as next month.

But even though Paterson made drilling for natural gas an environmental and economic centerpiece of his energy plan, he recently issued this warning:

"Drilling won't be allowed without overwhelming evidence that nothing will happen to drinking water," he told a Syracuse radio station.

Still, Paterson seems to recognize the debate over drilling that's fueling controversy here and throughout the state. He called it "a clash between a very lucrative profit-making opportunity and a very serious public safety hazard."

### No deal in Broome County

Remember that \$15.9 million a gas company recently offered Broome County to lease 5,600 acres of its land for drilling? It was a deal that might have sounded sweet for a cash-strapped county like Sullivan.

The deal is dead.

Broome backed out when the proposal didn't draw enough support from legislators. This was after the deal — which also included 20 percent in royalties — had drawn heat from all sides. Pro-drillers said it wasn't enough money. Anti-drillers said no money is ever enough.

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