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# Defending fracking and its process

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By NICOLE GUGINO  
OBSERVER Staff Writer

With many anti-fracking groups are organizing in the area, Jim Smith of the Independent Oil and Gas Association and Corning Place Consulting has a different side of the story.

Chautauqua County has a long history of gas drilling and has 5,000 wells currently active.

"The public assumes that hydraulic fracturing is new but it has been around for 60 years in New York and across the country. The only thing that is new is the DEC is considering combining hydraulic fracturing with horizontal drilling in the Marcellus Shale," Smith said.

Smith mentioned the economic impacts as positive.

"What we have here is a tremendous economic opportunity and given New York's track record and what the regulation will be coming from DEC, I think ... we could be operating much more safely than anywhere else in the country," Smith said.

A study from Cornell University Professor Susan Christopherson refutes industry claims and says that the jobs created are indirectly related to the gas industry and most directly related jobs go to experienced workers from Texas and Oklahoma.

"This is an emerging industry and the argument that people are flying in from Texas that's true, they are flying in from Oklahoma to do this work, but if you do a search on Marcellus shale jobs, you will find that colleges, unions are all offering either coursework, training ... this is an emerging industry in New York so while they are not hiring someone from ... Chautauqua County right now its because they haven't been trained yet," he replied.

On the website marcellusshalejobs.com no jobs were listed in New York state.

Smith defended hydraulic fracturing as being a safe process.

"The EPA, on more than one occasion, has determined a couple things. First that hydraulic fracturing is safe, they've got at least two studies ... that show that hydraulic fracturing has never led to contaminating water sources," he assured.

Smith denied that hydraulic fracturing had ever polluted ground water, including the famous incident in Dimmock, Pa.

"What happened there was a poor well casing that allowed natural gas to get into well water around people's homes. That was not a hydraulic fracturing incident. Frack fluid has never contaminated a drop of ground water in 1.1 million times it's been used. They claim that there is the potential to pollute but it's been done a million times. It's like saying the moon could crash to earth tomorrow ... but things like that just don't happen," he added. He refuted many claims made by anti-fracking groups including the



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amount of chemicals used in the process.

"They talk about 596 chemicals being used in the fracking process, that's just ridiculous ... (Gas companies) will tell you between six to 12 chemicals or ingredients are used at any time in the fracking process. 596 is something they dreamed up and repeated over and over again. They talk about the chemicals as is they are not used in thousands of industries.

"Chemicals are a huge part of life ... if it weren't for chemicals we wouldn't have safe drinking water. They want to protect the drinking water, but we wouldn't have drinking water without chemicals because we treat dirty water to make it clean. Chemicals play a huge part in our lives yet we use it as a four letter word," he said.

Smith explained why gas companies don't use hundreds of chemicals and why they don't pollute.

"The industry is in business so they don't want gas to leak out ... because chemicals cost money and they pollute, and if they pollute they'll be out of business. They don't want to use a lot of chemicals because they cost a lot of money and they want to use the minimum they can use to get the maximum productivity," he explained.

"Accidents do occur, trains go off the track, planes fall out of the sky, cars hit each other, what you want to do is put the proper regulations in place so when things like that happen ... the situation is mediated and resolved," he said.

Smith maintained that the new practice of horizontal drilling is just as safe as the current practice of vertical drilling.

"The issue is the volume of water that is used and we expect to see more activity because of the ability to now reach the Marcellus shale gas in an economic way. Hydraulic fracturing is not new but when combined with horizontal drilling they're able to tap more gas more economically, in other words from a single well head you can tap into 5, 6, or more horizontal distances," he explained.

When questioned on the practice of frack pits, Smith said that the DEC must inspect all pits and that claims of damaged pits leaking contaminated water into the soil was "anecdotal."

He also mentioned hearing that the DEC was considering limiting the use of frack pits.

He also maintained that the water extracted from drilling, could be recycled, treated or permanently housed in an regulated injection pit.

Smith was unsure of the penalties for violating regulations of water disposal.

"IOGA of New York's position would be if there are situations where things go wrong or regulations are violated then they be remediated ... If a pit is leaking we would expect the operator to remedy that," he said.

"The industry is in business so they don't want gas to leak out, they want to capture it and they don't want chemicals to leak out because chemicals cost money and they pollute, and if they pollute they'll be out of business. They don't want to use a lot of chemicals because they cost a lot of money and they want to use the minimum they can use to get the maximum productivity," Smith explained.

For more information on IOGA go to their website at [www.iogany.org](http://www.iogany.org).

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