

The New York Times

Green

A Blog About Energy and the Environment

AUGUST 16, 2011, 10:33 AM

Groups Ask Cuomo to Extend Fracking Review

By *MIREYA NAVARRO*

Environmental groups and some legislators are asking Gov. Andrew Cuomo for a longer public review of a New York State plan to permit a controversial method of natural gas extraction that combines hydraulic fracturing with horizontal drilling.

More than 70 groups sent a letter on Monday to both Governor Cuomo and Joe Martens, the commissioner of the state Department of Environmental Conservation, requesting a round of public hearings and an extension of a public comment period on the plan to six months from two months.

The groups said that two months was “wholly inadequate” for reviewing the revised draft of regulations prepared by the state. Their letter said that communities also needed a forum in which they could voice their concerns about increased industrial activity in their areas.

The regulations, which are in their second draft, would govern drilling in the rich natural gas field known as the Marcellus Shale and in other areas of the state.

The request for an extension drew support from the chairmen of the environmental conservation committees in the state Senate and Assembly — Senator Mark Grisanti, a Republican from Buffalo, and Assemblyman Robert K. Sweeney a Democrat from Lindenhurst — and from Assemblyman John J. McEneny, an Albany Democrat.

State officials have yet to release the full draft document, although they have made much of it public. They have said that the public comment period would begin when they release the full draft document in the next few weeks.

Natural gas industry representatives oppose the idea of more delays in granting drilling permits.

“The natural gas industry has waited more than three years to move forward with development of the Marcellus Shale,” the Independent Oil and Gas Association of New York said in a statement. “Clearly, this is a tactic to delay the issuance of drilling permits in New York’s southern tier and is not intended to facilitate a meaningful discussion.”

The association noted that a recent Quinnipiac University [poll](#) showed that a plurality of New York voters favor increased natural gas development.

It was close: the survey found that voters liked the potential economic benefits of drilling in the Marcellus Shale more than they feared possible environmental concerns by a 47-to-42 percent

margin. Support was stronger upstate, where drilling is expected to create jobs, than it was in New York City: upstate voters favored it by a 51-39 margin, whereas New York City voters opposed it by a 50-38 margin.