



Guest essay: Hydrofracking fears in NY: More politics than science

By **Duncan W. O'Dwyer**

Messenger Post

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Canandaigua, N.Y. — I wanted to respond to your editorial of Dec. 30 (“**State must take its time on hydrofracking**”) as I have spent a fair amount of time in the Southern Tier over the past two years providing real estate related representation and seeing first hand the incredible economic depression that pervades the area.

You note in your editorial that drilling horizontally from the vertical wells to tap into gas from rock formations such as the Marcellus Shale is more controversial than the drilling of vertical wells. You then reference opponents of drilling who say that black shale contains trace levels of uranium, and their key concern is that the concentration of this uranium at the surface on drilling equipment, and in combination with drilling muds, fracking fluid and other elements exposed in the drilling process can lead to contamination and until an infrastructure is in place to deal with toxic by-products, opponents argue the environment and public health are at risk.

Between July 2009 and June 2010, Pennsylvania’s 632 Marcellus wells released 180 billion cubic feet of gas, doubling state production. Compare that to the State of New York where the upstate region has lost 90,000 manufacturing jobs since 2001. A July study by the American Petroleum Institute estimates production in the Marcellus could provide \$15 billion in economic output and \$2 billion in state tax revenue over nine years for New York.

Your readers are entitled to the facts, which, after their ingestion, would lead one to believe that there is more politics in play than science.

About a decade ago the drilling industry made a technological breakthrough in attempting to tap into the Barnett Shale Formation in north central Texas. America was suddenly able to extract, cost-effectively, huge amounts of natural gas from tightly packed shale rocks. That has opened up vast new exploration possibilities including the 65 million-acre Marcellus Shale formation, which extends from Ohio and West Virginia up through Pennsylvania and upstate New York.

A recent Penn State study estimates that Marcellus is the second largest natural gas field in the world. The study notes that Pennsylvania had \$4.5 billion in Marcellus-related investment in 2009, generating nearly \$400 million in state and local tax revenues and 44,000 jobs. Between July 2009 and June 2010, Pennsylvania’s 632 Marcellus wells released 180 billion cubic feet of gas, doubling state production. In contrast, New York has imposed a defacto drilling moratorium because of dubious environmental fears.

Shale drilling relies on hydraulic fracturing, the process of blasting a solution that is 99 percent water and sand (less than 1 percent chemicals) into rock to release gas deposits. Fracking has been commercially viable since 1949 and is responsible for 30 percent of domestic oil and gas production. Recent advances in shale gas have come from combining fracking with “horizontal” drilling, which permits wells to move laterally under the surface. The industry uses steel casing and cement to prevent fracking fluid from polluting wells and underground reservoirs.

The Environmental Protection Agency and the Ground Water Protection Council, a nonprofit made up of state regulatory agencies, have published studies concluding that fracking is safe. The Ground Water Protection Council hasn’t found a single documented case of fracking having polluted local ground water.

I would suggest that if upstate New York is not to continue its economic slide into an abyss from which it cannot recover, that every effort be made by the new governor and state Legislature to allow “horizontal drilling” to immediately go forward with the DEC working closely with the drilling companies to insure environmental safety. This would create an economic boon for upstate New York and particularly the Southern Tier, which is in desperate need of jobs.

Duncan W. O'Dwyer of Pittsford is an attorney with the Rochester firm of Forseth, Howe, O'Dwyer, Kalb and Murphy, P.C.

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theproducer

1 day ago

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'economic slide into an abyss from which it cannot recover' I find this over the top fear mongering. Of course we could escape at any time ; by frackin'. Or by our bootstraps if we were wearing any.

There is no rational reason to allow frackin' at this time. Prices are down, technology is improving and infrastructure is weak. Why jump into it, especially at the bequest of someone who has only been around 2 years and has no real love for the area.

I'm sure he wants his cut.

Lately the govt has shown diesel fuel used as frackin' fluid. He doesn't mention this. In Arkansas there are lots of earthquakes in their frackin' region, lots, thousands. None of those areas are next to glacial lakes of unestimated worth on a drying planet.

Enough for now.

pogy

1 day ago

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Duncan, can you address concerns that some posters have about contamination from last week at

<http://www.mpnnow.com/opinions/columns/x286171168/Guest-essay-When-it-comes-to-hydrofracking-we-ll-have-what-they-re-having-coach22>

coach22

1 day ago

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Dear Duncan,

. Where in your entire essay do you say that the process of 'fracking is safe? Thanks for the economic news that we already know about.

Jesus was a Socialist

1 day ago

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I agree, Duncan, that we are entitled to the facts. All of them. The companies should provide, with independent verification, the amounts and types of chemicals they are putting in the ground. Right now the hydrofracking companies do not have to disclose what chemicals they use and they refuse to let us know what they are putting in the ground. We are entitled to these facts and the lack of these facts are truly where the politics are being played.

so far from
23 hours ago
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""The Environmental Protection Agency and the Ground Water Protection Council, a nonprofit made up of state regulatory agencies, have published studies concluding that fracking is safe. The Ground Water Protection Council has not found a single documented case of fracking having polluted local ground water.""

I believe this is where, in his entire essay, he says it is safe.

Jesus was a Socialist

16 hours ago
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'The 20-member board of directors of the Ground Water Protection Council (GWPC) unanimously passed a resolution calling for complete disclosure of chemicals used during the hydraulic fracturing process, common in the exploration of shale gas.'

Source: <http://www.wqpmag.com/Ground-Water-Protection-Council-Calls-for-Disclosure-of-Chemicals-in-Shale-Gas-Exploration-news> Piece 21700

'EPA agrees with Congress that there are serious concerns from citizens and their representatives about hydraulic fracturing's potential impact on drinking water, human health and the environment, which demands further study.'

Source: EPA's website

Not so sure saying that the EPA and the GWPC conclude that fracking is safe is an accurate statement.

pog
4 hours ago
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EPA agrees with congress that there are SERIOUS concerns from citizens and their representatives??????

WELL, WHAT pray tell, are these SERIOUS CONCERNS??????

LIST THEM OUT!!!

<the EPA has serious concerns about human beings being on this earth >

Jesus was a Socialist

2 hours ago

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Oh just minor things like cancer, birth defects..... I know your way out there, Pogy, but I think there's room for bipartisanship in being against poisoning our citizens.

Naielag

2 hours ago

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Well if you have to put toxic chemicals and water supply in the same sentence, that sounds like a big concern to me.

OpenMinded123

2 hours ago

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You title your article 'More politics than Science' yet fail to bring anything scientific to your argument. You are quick to point out the economic possibilities and successes in Pennsylvania but again do not prove in any way that hydrofracking is safe. You simply claim that the EPA and GWPCA approve of fracking and say it is safe which is clearly not the case. The truth is that hydrofracking is a very new technology that poses some serious potential threats that need to be examined further before we jump into something we know little about. It isn't just the extraction process people are concerned about. It's the construction of the site, extraction, waste removal, potential accidents etc... It is clear that you have little understanding of people's legitimate concerns with this issue. Please present me with some real scientific points that show me how 'safe' fracking is, then write your essay on more politics than science. You my friend are playing the media game and trying to use an interesting headline to make your point instead of providing real facts and information. We understand the economic opportunities but are concerned with possible threats that have yet to be addressed.

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