

Hydrofracking less a threat to water than septic systems

By Jerry Michael • October 13, 2010, 12:00 am

My daughter and grandchildren live on our family farm in Whitney Point. We will not be signing a gas lease until we are convinced that the final Department of Environmental Conservation regulations provide adequate protection for our well water, and that the DEC has the resources on board to perform inspections and enforce the regulations.

I want to comment on the threat hydrofracking presents to drinking water — as compared to another source of pollution we have been dealing with for more than 100 years.

I think that at least 90 percent of the land that will eventually be drilled for natural gas is not served by public sewer systems. In the country and many suburbs, we depend on septic systems; these systems are seldom inspected or brought up to code until a property changes hands. We hope that our septic tanks are containing the worst of what goes into them, and that the effluent is sufficiently filtered and purified by the soil before it reaches our water wells, which may be less than 100 feet away.

We also hope that the honey-dipper who we hire to pump out our tank from time to time disposes of the material in a legal and responsible way, but we don't really know for sure. And when our septic systems give us problems, we hustle off to Lowe's to buy some really nasty chemicals to open up the drainage field. If you read the labels on any of these products, you might rather pour fracking fluid down your drain if you thought it would do any good.

I'm not suggesting that Rep. Maurice Hinchey or anyone from the federal government should come sniffing around our septic systems. I do want to point out a real anomaly here, though. We seem to be comfortable living with septic systems that contain heavy metals and discharge effluent containing ammonia, phosphorus and heaven knows what else to within a couple hundred feet of our aquifers.

Yet, for some reason, some of us are more concerned about hydrofracking fluids even though they are injected thousands of feet below our aquifers, are separated from them by impermeable rock, and when these fluids are recovered, we will

know exactly who takes them where, and what they do with them.

I just don't understand what all the fuss is about; we seem to be making a mountain out of a relative molehill.

Michael is a Binghamton resident.



We focus on automating Marriott® Hotels' global invoice process. So they don't have to.

Learn more at RealBusiness.com

xerox
Ready For Real Business

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™