

# PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

## New York waits, learns from Pennsylvania, West Virginia shale drilling

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New York's moratorium on Marcellus shale drilling allowed regulators there to learn from experiences in Pennsylvania and West Virginia, a top official said Tuesday.

New York state has not allowed gas well drilling into the shale for two years and plans to issue strict rules before doing so, said Jack Dahl, director of the Bureau of Oil and Gas Regulation in the New York Department of Environmental Conservation.

Since early 2008, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection has issued 3,800 Marcellus shale well permits and more than 1,400 violations against drillers. Regulators cited drillers for blowouts at gas wells here and in West Virginia, and dozens of violations include discharges of industrial waste and poorly constructed impoundment ponds.

"We have learned from the other states, and what may be done in a different way if we don't have it covered," Dahl said during an industry conference in Cecil, hosted by West Virginia University, that drew about 100 participants.

Regulators in New York would require companies to disclose chemicals they use in hydraulic fracturing -- which Pennsylvania does not -- and to hold flowback water in closed containers, rather than the open pits allowed in Pennsylvania, Dahl said. New York would not issue permits for more wells than it could routinely inspect, Dahl said.

Environmental groups and regulators need time to catch up with the fast-moving industry, said Shanda Minney, executive director of the West Virginia Rivers Coalition, a nonprofit organization that advocates for clean water.

"Without some kind of slowdown or moratorium like New York put in place, we're going to be cleaning up rather than playing catch up," Minney said.

Gas companies have been fracturing rock formations to release gas safely for 60 years, said Jim Cannon, spokesman for Range Resources, a Fort Worth company with an office in Cecil. No proof exists of groundwater contamination from hydraulic fracturing, he said.

"There's no point in having a moratorium if we're doing things safely and efficiently," Cannon said.

"The more wells you drill, the more information you get," said Jaime Kostelnik, senior geologic scientist with the Pennsylvania Geological Survey, a state agency that studies but does not regulate gas drilling.

Any advantage from regulatory delay comes with a price from lost investment, said Doug Patchen, director of the Appalachian Oil and Natural Gas Research Consortium at West Virginia University.

"They've lost a lot of money that they could have had," Patchen said.

The number of permits for conventional gas wells in New York dropped to 552 last year from 744 the previous year, Dahl said, and likely will not break 500 this year. Gas companies are investing instead in states that permit Marcellus shale drilling, he said.

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