

On natural gas drilling, Paterson says expediency will not outweigh safety

By Joseph Spector • Albany Bureau • April 20, 2010, 4:15 pm

ALBANY - Gov. David Paterson said Tuesday that the state's review of natural gas extraction from the Marcellus Shale will not be compromised for the sake of expediency.

Speaking at an Earth Day event, Paterson said that any natural gas drilling in New York needs to be weighed against the impact it would have on the water supply, which he predicted will be one of critical issues facing the country over the next decade.

[Read more about the Marcellus Shale](#)

"For us to be investing in any drilling of natural gas could only exist - and we have not made a final decision - if there is a finding that it's safe and does not affect our environment, particularly the water that we drink," Paterson said.

Later, Paterson told reporters that the state is moving cautiously to ensure the environment is not negatively impacted by drilling into the Marcellus Shale, which stretches across the Southern Tier and into portions of Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia.

"We're not going to worry about time because we're talking about public safety," said Paterson, whose term expires at year's end and he is not seeking election in November.

The governor's comments come after state Department of Environmental Conservation commissioner Alexander "Pete" Grannis told Gannett's Albany Bureau last week that a draft plan for natural gas extraction from the Marcellus Shale is being slowed by a staff shortage and may not be finished until late summer or early fall.

The agency is reviewing 13,500 comments from the public on the draft, which must be finalized before permits to drill are granted.

Environmentalists rallied Tuesday against the drilling proposal, saying it would irrevocably hurt the state's environment.

"What you are talking about is coming into our backyards and our living areas, for people who plan to live there their whole lives, and turning it into an industrial area," said David Kauber, 64, of Aurora, Cayuga County, who was among environmentalists at the Capitol.

Drilling proponents said the state could raise more than \$200 million in the current fiscal year by expediting the auction of state land leases.

Last week, the Independent Oil & Gas Association of New York said the money could be used to fund state parks and environmental initiatives in the state.

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