

# GREEN SHEET | New York



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**ENVIRONMENTAL  
ADVOCATES OF NEW YORK**

YOUR GOVERNMENT WATCHDOG

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## FRACKING BY THE NUMBERS

**UP TO 7.8 MILLION**—

Gallons of water used to “frack” one natural gas well

**17**—Staff regulating drilling permits in New York State

**809 PAGES**—Length of the State’s draft drilling regulations

**60 DAYS**—Comment period for New York’s draft drilling guide

**0**—Number of public hearings to discuss drilling regulations in New York State

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### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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- 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

## Protect New York from “Fracking” Dangers

New York’s Southern Tier and Catskills regions are home to small towns, family farms, scenic rivers with freshwater fisheries, and irreplaceable open spaces. But beneath this natural beauty lie trillions of cubic feet of natural gas, trapped within the rock of the Marcellus Shale formation.

Until now, the Marcellus Shale has been safe from those looking to drill for natural gas. But increased demand for cleaner-burning natural gas, lower prices and new technology have all fueled the natural gas drilling rush.

Most recently, the State’s Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has released a draft guide for drilling in the Marcellus Shale. This 809-page guide—formally known as the draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement—will determine how well (or not) New York regulates this potentially dangerous industry. The draft is only open to public comment for 60 days, not nearly enough time for New Yorkers to weigh in on one of the State’s biggest environmental challenges.

Because the natural gas is trapped between layers of rock in the Marcellus Shale, it’s difficult to extract. Natural gas companies propose using a drilling technique called hydraulic fracturing, known as “fracking.” Fracking drills deep into the rock. A mix of potentially toxic chemicals, water and sand is then pumped into the rock under high pressure to expand fractures in the rock, releasing the natural gas that is trapped there. The gas is captured when it is pumped to the surface.

### DRILLING DANGERS

In other parts of the country, hydraulic fracturing has poisoned wells and drinking water supplies due to insufficient oversight and regulation.

Fracking fluid contains toxic chemicals and known carcinogens. These chemicals can leak into our drinking water systems, putting the health of all New Yorkers at risk. And because much of the Marcellus Shale formation lies under watersheds across the State, including New York City, this puts the drinking water of millions of New Yorkers at risk.

Currently, natural gas companies aren’t required by law to disclose all of the chemicals used during fracking, so New Yorkers have no way of knowing what might enter the water supply. At each well site, land will be cleared and leveled, water trucked in and out, and wastewater containing chemicals, heavy metals and low-level radioactive material will be stored on-site.

New York’s wastewater treatment plants aren’t prepared to adequately address the resulting pollution because the technology isn’t advanced enough to treat this type of contamination.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

To address some of these concerns, Environmental Advocates of New York is pushing the DEC and the State Legislature to make some changes. New York needs strict regulations and sufficient enforcement staff to protect our waters from the dangers of drilling.

New York State also needs adequate staff to regulate fracking. The DEC’s Division of Mineral Resources has only 17 staffers to regulate drilling permits.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Environmental Advocates of New York relies on support from donors like you to make our work possible. Throughout the years, we've met some interesting folks who have made environmental protection not only a hobby, but also a career. Justin Green, founder of Build it Green! NYC (Big!NYC) is one of the generous donors who has done just that.

Big!NYC is New York City's only nonprofit retail outlet for salvaged and surplus building materials. The group works to keep these materials out of the landfill, while offering discounts on their resale. Big!NYC is sponsored by Community Environmental Center. Learn more at [www.bignyc.org](http://www.bignyc.org).

Working for an environmental group has increased Justin's awareness of the critical need for support. Justin's support enables us to keep our email action alert service up and running. This year, the emails our members sent and calls made using our action alerts helped move the Governor and state lawmakers to update New York's bottle deposit law and expand our state's most effective recycling program, as well as safeguard the Environmental Protection Fund.

For more information on donating to Environmental Advocates visit [www.eany.org](http://www.eany.org).



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## DIRECTOR'S CHAIR

New York State is blessed with an abundance of freshwater. As luck would have it, it is also blessed with an abundance of natural gas. Ironically, the abundance of the latter threatens the abundance of the former.

Natural gas drilling is raising red flags over potential impacts to ground and surface waters. The process to extract the gas, known as hydraulic fracturing or "fracking," uses a tremendous volume of water and toxic chemicals that can contaminate drinking water.

This isn't speculation, it's a fact. In the western United States, the natural gas industry has caused water quality and quantity problems for ranchers, farmers and those who seek solace in the outdoors, not to mention communities that draw drinking water from now poisoned sources.

And as natural gas exploration began in nearby Pennsylvania, problems quickly followed. Earlier this fall, accidents linked to natural gas drilling spilled toxic chemicals into wetlands and creeks, killing fish and poisoning the water.

How has this dangerous industry escaped responsible oversight? In 2005, Congress exempted fracking from the federal Safe Drinking Water Act, leaving the states with insufficient policies to regulate this fast-growing industry. New York is now moving rapidly (too much so to Environmental Advocates' taste) to create a framework to oversee natural gas exploration.

Governor Paterson is in a rush to get the gas flowing. He shouldn't be. The gas isn't going

anywhere. It's been down there for about 200 million years. If New York takes time and does this right, we'll be able to safely extract the gas. One need only look to Pennsylvania to see what happens when you rush—accidents happen.



And those accidents happened after 39 new staff were added to Pennsylvania's environmental agency, specifically to oversee the natural gas industry. In New York, we have only 17 staff to regulate natural gas extraction, and the Governor is cutting almost 500 staff at the Department of Environmental Conservation this year alone. This doesn't bode well for his "drill baby drill" approach.

Governor Paterson, Environmental Advocates is pleading with you to slow down. Your State Energy Plan calls for doubling gas production, but it doesn't have to be overnight. Let's do this in a responsible manner that does not trash our rivers, lakes and water supplies for the sake of getting gas as quickly as possible. It's not going anywhere.

Once our waters are contaminated, it will be a long and costly process to clean-up the mess that inadequate oversight has created.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

## HYDROFRACKING

In addition, Environmental Advocates would like the DEC to receive authority over water withdrawals statewide. Currently, there is no standard way to regulate the amount of water withdrawn and where it comes from. In parts of New York, gas companies can drill wherever and whenever and take as much water as they like without consequence.

### LOOKING AHEAD

Environmental Advocates is reviewing the DEC's draft drilling guide. We hope that the draft reflects New Yorkers' concerns regarding wastewater treatment and drinking water pollution.

We're also asking the DEC and Governor Paterson to extend the comment period to at least 90 days, if not 120, to allow New Yorkers enough time to comment on this critical issue. Visit [www.eany.org](http://www.eany.org) to ask for a longer comment period.

Stay tuned to see what we uncover in the draft drilling guide and learn more about what natural gas drilling could mean for New York State.

### Green Jobs - Green New York

Late on September 10<sup>th</sup>, the New York State Senate passed the Green Jobs-Green New York Act, a measure that will create thousands of new jobs across the State and help thousands of families and businesses save up to a billion dollars annually in energy costs. The bill passed the Senate 52-8. The Assembly unanimously voted "yes" on the measure earlier this year.

Green Jobs-Green New York takes our state one step further on the path to a cleaner, more sustainable economy, creating thousands of green jobs while making our homes and small businesses more energy efficient. That means smaller utility bills, fewer greenhouse gas emissions, and new jobs when our economy needs them the most, all at no new cost to New York.

The legislation will establish a statewide building efficiency retrofit program by financing energy efficiency audits and installations in residential, multi-family, nonprofit and small business structures. It also creates a workforce training program to fill the jobs created by the Act.

### EarthShare New York

Environmental Advocates of New York is a member of EarthShare New York, a federated workplace giving fundraising entity that represents and supports many respected and responsible environmental and conservation charities. Hundreds of workplaces across the country give their employees the opportunity to make charitable gifts through payroll contributions. Find out if your employer hosts a workplace giving campaign and if it includes EarthShare New York.

To find out more about how you and your workplace can support Environmental Advocates through an EarthShare campaign, please call Deb Sgambelluri at 518.462.5526, ext. 230, or visit [www.earthshare.org](http://www.earthshare.org). To donate through EarthShare, designate your donation to Environmental Advocates of New York, CFC #97425.

### Great Lakes

One year ago, New York State signed on to the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact, an eight-state agreement to responsibly manage Great Lakes water.

In New York, a group called the Great Lakes Basin Advisory Council was charged with recommending ways to make the Compact work. In July 2009, the Council issued a draft report, but the draft failed to make the strong, protective recommendations necessary to manage one of our most precious resources—the Great Lakes.

In response, Environmental Advocates and National Wildlife Federation filed comments on ways to improve the draft in order to protect the lakes. You can read the full draft at [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/25585.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/25585.html), and can read our recommendations for the report at [www.eany.org](http://www.eany.org). Stay tuned for our take on the final report and next steps to implementing the Compact.

## 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

For 10 years, Environmental Advocates of New York has hosted the annual Advocate Awards Gala to honor New Yorkers who have demonstrated exemplary service and leadership in protecting the State's natural resources. This year's honorees include climate change pioneer Carter Bales, sustainable cities hero Andrew Darrell, and Lieutenant Governor and mass transit advocate Richard Ravitch.

Two-thousand-and-nine is special for another reason—this year, Environmental Advocates is celebrating our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The Advocate Awards pay tribute to extraordinary environmental advocates. We're certain that at least a few of our members have memories to share about past honorees. Perhaps you attended the year Gwyneth Paltrow (daughter of Board member Blythe Danner) served as emcee? Or maybe you were there to honor Carol Ash, who went on to become Commissioner of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation?

If you have a memory or photograph that you'd like to share from a past event, please send it to Daniella Nordin at [dnordin@eany.org](mailto:dnordin@eany.org) so that we can include it in this year's event program.

Help us celebrate 40 years of protecting the environment by going to [www.eany.org](http://www.eany.org) to donate \$40 for 40 years.



# BE AN ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCATE TODAY!

Stay up-to-date on statewide environmental issues by becoming a member of Environmental Advocates of New York for just \$35. Membership includes a **subscription to our bi-monthly *Green Sheet New York* newsletter** and **a copy of EPL/Environmental Advocates' annual *Voters' Guide***. Please be sure to include your address with your payment. For more information, contact **Peggy Fandrich at 518.462.5526, ext. 236**.

## Join Environmental Advocates today!

- \$1000 Advocates Circle    \$750 Steward    \$500 Defender    \$250 Protector  
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