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SEP Comments  
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**CWCWC Comments at the August 21st Public Hearing on the 2009 Draft  
NYS Energy Plan**

The Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition, Inc. is a not-for-profit coalition of over 50 groups - community, environmental, housing and religious - whose objective is to maintain safe, clean and affordable drinking water for NYC and NYS residents, with particular emphasis on the Croton water supply.

The Draft NYS Energy Plan would "encourage development of the Marcellus Shale natural gas formation with environmental safeguards that are protective of water supplies and natural resources."

NYC's Delaware watershed that supplies superb quality, still unfiltered drinking water for up to 60% of the NYC metropolitan area's needs, lies within the Marcellus Shale.

CWCWC considers the Energy Plan's program to extract natural gas within the NYC watershed to be a dire threat, indeed an unacceptable threat to the integrity of the drinking water supply for over 9 million NYS residents. Furthermore, we are adamantly opposed to hydrofracturing, or "fracking", which is the most likely method to be used for gas extraction.

NYC has an unparalleled source of drinking water that lies within a 2,000 square mile watershed. 90% of NYC and metropolitan needs are supplied by the West-of-Hudson (WOH) Catskill/Delaware (Cat/Del) watershed. The remaining 10% are supplied by the East-of-Hudson (EOH) Croton watershed.

The negative environmental impacts of development in the Croton Watershed have forced the construction of a chemical treatment/filtration plant costing over \$3 billion.

The Cat/Del watershed remains far less developed, and is over 70% forested.

Thanks to the abundance of forest, the water from this watershed is of such high quality that it only requires minimal treatment - a probable saving of over \$20 billion should a water treatment plant have to be built because of water contamination.

But water contamination is exactly what is likely to happen if "fracking" is allowed in the Delaware watershed. "Fracking" includes:

- Clearing access roads through the forest and clearing a well site that can be anywhere from 3 acres to 30 acres
- Extracting from 1 to 3 million gallons of water from the aquifer (this is likely to deplete nearby streams that will lose their base-flow during the dry months) or trucking in the needed water from elsewhere;
- Mixing the water with sand and chemicals whose mix is a trade secret;
- Drilling a well several thousand feet deep;
- Drilling at right angles through the shale layer for another several thousand feet;
- Forcing the water down into the well under such power that it will break up the shale containing gas and release the gas into the well;

At least 40% of the chemically contaminated water can remain below ground for up to four years, and seep into the aquifer before gradually being absorbed and diluted. The remaining contaminated water is either trucked off to be treated at a sewage treatment plant that is, one hopes, suitably equipped to treat the chemicals, or is stored in above-ground pools at the site. In the latter case, runoff from storm water and infiltration into groundwater pose a threat.

These well sites leave gaping holes in the forest canopy, and the truck roads fragment the forest itself. Both have the effect of weakening the forest and diminishing its unique ability to provide clean, fresh water.

The potential for contamination of local wells, aquifers, streams and reservoirs is very real. Already there have been numerous reports of local wells being contaminated although the gas drillers claim that this is but a small percentage. However, it is a 100% loss for the homeowner. And the loss to the 9 million NYS residents who depend on this water would be immeasurably higher.

Because "fracking" can cause irretrievable damage to NYC's main source of drinking water, the permitting agencies and authorities must bear the full burden of proof that this method of extraction will not degrade it in any way.

Only if the most stringent regulations are strictly enforced will there be any realistic hope of protecting our drinking water.

Unfortunately, there seems to be little desire for strict enforcement by the Governor and the NYS agencies. The Governor's recent Executive Order #25, under the pretexts of efficiency and saving money, in reality merely eases the permitting process for a sadly-

depleted DEC staff, and shortens the applicant's period of waiting for a permit. It does nothing to protect our water.

With NYS facing difficult economic times, the Governor would, no doubt, be pleased for NYS to receive \$1 billion in anticipated revenues from gas drilling. Difficult as it may be, however, we urge the Governor to take the long-term view and not sacrifice NYS's unique resource, its drinking water, for short-term gains.

We urge that gas drilling in the NYC watershed be excluded from 2009 NYS Energy Plan.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

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Director  
*CWCWC*