

Your stake in gas drilling

IS YOUR UNLEASED PROPERTY FACING “COMPULSORY INTEGRATION” AT THE HANDS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION (DEC)?

Property owners who were unswayed by the dishonest dealings of the landmen seeking drilling leases for gas corporations may have thought that all they had to do was “Just Say No” in order to protect their families from the impacts of unregulated gas-drilling. Now they are becoming aware of the role of the DEC in forcing landowners to give up their subsoil rights. How does that work?

1. A gas corporation applies for a permit from the DEC (currently at the rate of 1000/year) to drill a well within a “drilling unit” whose boundaries the driller proposes. The boundaries may cut across property lines at will
2. If 60% of the land *surface* in the proposed unit is leased or owned outright by the applicant driller, the DEC will hold a Compulsory Integration Hearing which will extinguish the remaining landowners’ claims to their *subsoil* gas rights, giving the driller access (via horizontal drilling) to that gas. For details go to http://chenangogreens.org/home/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=130&Itemid=60
3. Most “integrated” landowners will end up making the default choice to receive royalties at a rate of 12 ½%, much lower than that available to lessors, which serves to extort compliance with the gas company’s offer.
4. Because of the new horizontal drilling techniques, your newly integrated property can be “mined” of its gas without drillers setting foot on your property. Recent amendments to drilling laws have halved the setback from property lines and drilling unit boundaries. Trends in recovery techniques have increased the likelihood of multiple hydraulic fracturing events far from the wellhead
5. So, if your neighbors have leased or sold to the gas corporation, there’s a good chance your property will suffer the impacts of gas drilling, which is completely exempt from federal environmental law, and minimally regulated by New York State, which has passed laws forbidding county, town, and other municipal governments from taking any steps to protect their citizens.

Since you will be forced to be a pawn in this game, you owe it to yourself to know how your forced participation in the gas-drilling process will affect your family, and your community.

- Gas-well drilling, carried out 24/7 over the course of three months per well, will soon build to **very high levels of noise** (83 decibels, or the volume of a subway at 200’) that will continue until all the wells in one’s neighborhood have been drilled.

- The five-acre drill sites, currently on 40-acre spacing, require constant treatment with toxic **herbicides for weed control**
- Drilling “muds” that provide lubrication and other services to the well-boring process contain biocides, oil-based lubricants, and other **additives no longer regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency (since 2005)** can remain on-site, subject to being carried downhill by rainfall, wind, and erosion
- Horizontally-drilled wells are then “fractured”. The “fracturing” uses extreme pressure to force up to 3 million gallons of fluid (including diesel fuels, heavy metals, and other toxics) to break up the shale rock and let the gas flow to the wellhead. The gas industry is the only one which is **exempt from the terms of the Safe Water Drinking Act**, which forbids the unregulated injection of poisons into the ground.
- Both drilling and fracturing involves the use of lots and lots of diesel-driven, truck-mounted compressors that generate (besides noise) levels of nitrous oxide (ozone/smog precursor), benzene, aromatic hydrocarbons, particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, and volatile compounds that cause and aggravate asthma, cardio problems, and cancer. These **airborne substances migrate downhill** to the villages and cities along our river valleys.
- Initial and repeat fracturing of drill bores also takes millions upon millions of gallons of additive-laced water per wellbore. About 40% of this remains underground, where it will always pose a **potential threat to underground water**. The other 60% is returned to the surface along with other substances previously held in the shale layer being fractured. This returned water is pumped into earth-bermed evaporation ponds lined with uncemented plastic sheets. After completion, the sludges left behind may simply be bulldozed, providing an eternal supply of toxic substances to threaten soils, air and water.
- The billions of gallons water these drilling muds and fracking liquids required can legally be taken from public watercourses, including, as in an early case in Chenango County, privately-owned lakes and **wetlands which water-haulers can access from public roads**, with the blessing of the DEC. These water withdrawals have already resulted in effects on wildlife.
- Venting and flaring of **impure gases liberated by the drilling process is likewise not inspected/regulated** by any level of government. They include known carcinogens, explosives, hydrogen sulfide, heavy metals, sulfurous and nitrous oxides.
- The industry will be buying water from municipal water systems, as it sought in Otsego County. **But it will also be taking water from any public bodies of water, including wetlands, they can access from the road.** In Chenango County, a privately-owned wetland was tapped. It is already using **local water-treatment plants, often near capacity**, especially in Chenango County.
- It will increase **demands on local medical services**, due to the severity of jobsite injuries.
- Local ambulance and emergency services, already stretched to the breaking point, will have to respond to **accidents involving radioactive elements** concentrating on, and scraped off of, drilling equipment, accidental amputations and mutilations.
- Local fire departments used to responding to house and brush fires will have to deal with **chemical fires** and gas eruptions for which they will be unprepared
- Town government’s biggest budget item is its road/highway department. Gas drilling affects **town and county roads** because truck traffic carrying 800,000 to 4 million gallons of water per well and again per fracking wears out roads.
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- *For a range of topics relating gas-drilling to your health please see www.oqap.org*
- *Read the news on local gas drilling at www.chenangogreens.org*
- *Join the discussion group at marcellusqasinfo-subscribe@googlegroups.com*