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# The Problems with Fracking in New York State

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## James Northrup Speaks Out

**James Northrup - (Full 27 Minutes)** from **Sustainable Otsego** on **Vimeo**.

In an informative, thoughtful, and clear video, James Northrup, a 30-year veteran of the oil and gas industry who was a former planning manager and owner of onshore and offshore oil rigs, discusses the particular problems associated with hydraulic fracturing in the state of New York. According to Northrup:

1. The drilling regulations in New York are outdated and based on the drilling of small, vertical wells that do not equal the magnitude of a hydraulically fractured well. As Northrup describes it, when you hydrofrack a well, “what effectively you’re doing is you’re exploding a bomb underneath the ground. It’s a horizontal bomb, it’s a pipe bomb but the explosive power of it to break that rock up is equivalent to a really large bomb.” New York’s archaic regulations are not equipped to handle this type of powerful horizontal drilling activity and need to be brought up to the standards of today’s technology.
2. New York State has a lot of seismic faulting and a large number of aquifers that overlay the Marcellus and Utica Shales. Aquifers are permeable or porous rock formations containing water that can supply wells. The danger this presents is that there may be faults that are not visible from the surface that could be fracked, or opened up and act as a conduit allowing fracking fluid to enter an aquifer and as a result contaminate the well water.
3. Like Pennsylvania, New York State has no direct taxation on the production of gas, which means that the state would receive absolutely no direct revenue from the extraction of natural gas via hydraulic fracturing. Consequently, the state would lose out on valuable revenue they could use to regulate hydraulic fracturing including but not limited to inspections, necessary cleanups and rebuilding of roads, wastewater disposal and recycling.
4. Unique to NY is also the fact that the state’s environmental watchdog, the DEC, is also the same agency that issues well permits. This is an inherent conflict of interest that obviously compromises the very department that is charged with ensuring the safety and welfare of the environment. In order for the DEC to properly perform its function, these two tasks must be carried out by separate agencies.
5. States initiated pooling, the practice of combining tracts of land to meet the spacing requirements for a single well, as a safety measure. However, in New York, this measure intended to protect citizens can be used to compel owners that don’t want to participate in the leasing of their land for gas drilling to participate in forced pooling.
6. The ownership of water sources in NY also presents an issue when it comes to hydraulic fracturing because the state owns all the lakes except for the reservoirs. This means that municipalities, which use the lakes for drinking water, have no control over their drinking water sources. The state can lease land to a gas driller near a lake used as a water source by a municipality and the city or town would have no say over it.

There are certain safety measures that Northrup believes are necessary for drilling in New York.

1. One vital safety measure is the use of non-toxic chemicals in hydraulic fracturing and points out that it is not at all necessary for the industry to use toxic chemicals and carcinogens in fracking fluid.
2. Northrup also recommends that there be no fracking of any horizontal section of a well without first conducting sufficient seismic surveys on it which provide a look at the rock layers to identify whether or not there is any localized faulting.

There are serious issues that are tied to hydraulic fracturing overall and some which are specific to New York State. Once again, Northrup’s commentary echoes our concerns about how ill-equipped the DEC is to permit, monitor, investigate, and enforce stringent safeguards for high-volume hydraulic fracturing in New York.



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