

Many groups question health review & fracking delay

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(Source: Jason Weinstein)



With word that the state's health review of hydrofracking will force it to miss a November 29th deadline that opens the door for more public comment and potentially longer delays in gas-drilling regulations, pro-fracking interests are - not surprisingly - upset.

"It was never necessary for the DEC to go back to the drawing board. I think what we're seeing is a lot of claims and fear mongering that is turning out not to be true," said Jim Smith, spokesperson for the Independent Oil and Gas Association of New York.

But anti-fracking activists are upset as well. Walter Hang of Toxics Targeting has led the charge to keep the state's moratorium on fracking in place. But he says because the review is limited to the DEC's own report instead of a comprehensive review of fracking's health and environmental impact.

"It fundamentally fails to address the critical questions: What's the broad spectrum of toxic pollutants associated with fracking. What happens to those pollutants when they're released into the environment?" asks Hang.

And this afternoon the Joint Landowners Coalition of New York sent a letter to Governor Cuomo and DEC Commissioner Joe Martens expressing strong disappointment with the delay. It states readily available studies and science should guide a simple review of health impacts. It points specifically to a report done on the air quality of Fort Worth, Texas, an area that is home to fracking operations. Other groups say enough science exists to make a decision.

"So the DEC and the Governor have said their decision will be made on science. So we're hopeful that's still the case," said Smith.

But Hang says the DEC's report on fracking doesn't address critical environmental issues. He also says if a further delay lasts at least a year, gubernatorial politics could play a role in the fate of fracking.

"Then we go to a Gubernatorial election cycle and that could have enormous implications," said Hang.

In Broome County, Jason Weinstein, Fox 40 HD News