

New York State Department of Health Completes Review of High-volume Hydraulic Fracturing

Acting DOH Commissioner Zucker Recommends Activity Should Not Move Forward in New York State

DEC Commissioner Martens Will Issue a Findings Statement Early Next Year to Prohibit High-Volume Hydraulic Fracturing

ALBANY, N.Y. (December 17, 2014) - The state Department of Health has completed its public health review of high-volume hydraulic fracturing (HVHF) and Acting DOH Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker recommended that high-volume hydraulic fracturing should not move forward in New York State. Dr. Zucker announced his findings and recommendations today at a Cabinet Meeting in Albany.

"I have considered all of the data and find significant questions and risks to public health which as of yet are unanswered," said Dr. Zucker. "I think it would be reckless to proceed in New York until more authoritative research is done. I asked myself, 'would I let my family live in a community with fracking?' The answer is no. I therefore cannot recommend anyone else's family to live in such a community either."

In 2012, Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Joe Martens asked the DOH Commissioner to conduct a review of the draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement for High-Volume Hydraulic Fracturing (SGEIS). Dr. Zucker's report fulfills that request.

As a result of Dr. Zucker's report, Commissioner Martens stated at the Cabinet Meeting today that he will issue a legally binding findings statement that will prohibit HVHF in New York State at this time.

"For the past six years, DEC has examined the significant environmental impacts that could result from high-volume hydraulic fracturing," DEC Commissioner Joe Martens said. "DEC's own review identified dozens of potential significant adverse impacts of HVHF. Further, with the exclusion of sensitive natural, cultural and historic resources and the increasing number of towns that have enacted bans and moratoria, the risks substantially outweigh any potential economic benefits of HVHF. Considering the research, public comments, relevant studies, Dr. Zucker's report and the enormous record DEC has amassed on this issue, I have directed my staff to complete the final SGEIS. Once that is complete, I will prohibit high-volume hydraulic fracturing in New York State at this time."

DEC will incorporate the findings of the public health review into the Final SGEIS, which will be released with a response to public comments early next year. A minimum of 10 days later, Commissioner Martens will issue the findings statement prohibiting HVHF. This action will conclude the State Environmental Quality Review Act process for HVHF.

DOH's review found significant uncertainties about: the adverse health outcomes that may be associated with HVHF; the likelihood of occurrence of adverse health outcomes; and the adequacy of mitigation measures to protect public health. DOH's report concludes that it will be years until science and research provide sufficient information to determine the level of risk HVHF poses to public health and whether those risks can be adequately mitigated. Given the red flags raised by current studies, absent conclusive studies that disprove health concerns, the report states the activity should not proceed in New York State.

In conducting its public health review, DOH reviewed and evaluated scientific literature, sought input from outside public health experts, engaged in field visits and discussions with health and environmental authorities in nearly all states where HVHF activity is taking place, and communicated with local, state, federal, international, academic, environmental and public health stakeholders. DOH's review can be found at: http://www.health.ny.gov/press/reports/docs/high_volume_hydraulic_fracturing.pdf

At the Cabinet meeting, Governor Cuomo thanked the Commissioners and their respective departments for their work.

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