Fracking Opponents Rally; NY Decision Nears

MARY ESCH, Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — More than 1,000 demonstrators marched to New York's state Capitol on Monday to keep up the pressure on Gov. Andrew Cuomo as he prepares to decide whether to allow shale gas drilling using high-volume hydraulic fracturing after four years of studying its health and environmental impacts.

The coalition of groups rallied at Albany's Corning Preserve along the Hudson River before marching several blocks to the Capitol to deliver a pledge of resistance demanding that Cuomo ban hydraulic fracturing, or fracking. The process uses millions of gallons of chemically treated water to blast open gas-rich shale deposits deep underground.

Some of the protesters carried a large cardboard likeness of Cuomo with an angel and devil on his shoulders to represent the opposing viewpoints of drilling opponents and industry supporters. Others toted tall mock-ups of windmills to symbolize their preference for renewable energy sources over fossil fuels such as natural gas.

Josh Fox, director of the anti-fracking documentary "Gasland," vowed civil disobedience if New York state regulators allow shale gas drilling.

"If they allow this to happen, I'm putting myself between the rig and the pad," Fox shouted to the roaring crowd.

The Department of Environmental Conservation is nearing completion of an environmental impact study and new regulations for gas drilling using horizontal drilling and high-volume fracking technology. When the study is complete, Cuomo is expected to allow drilling to begin on a limited basis in communities near the Pennsylvania border.

Advances in fracking technology have allowed the industry to extract enormous volumes of natural gas from rock formations such as the Marcellus Shale, which lies under southern New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia. Fracking has also raised concerns about the potential for drinking water contamination and other adverse impacts in densely populated regions unaccustomed to an industry that has until recently been active mostly in the West and Gulf Coast.

Last week, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg wrote a Washington Post opinion piece in favor of natural gas development in New York state and awarded a $6 million grant from his philanthropic organization to the Environmental Defense Fund for work to minimize adverse environmental impacts from natural gas operations.

"The environmentalists who oppose all fracking are wrong, and the drillers who

claim that regulation will kill the industry are wrong," Bloomberg said in a prepared statement. "What we need to do is make sure that the gas is extracted carefully and in the right places, and that has to be done through strong, responsible regulation."

New York City officials succeeded in getting the DEC to ban drilling in the city's watershed region in upstate New York. Opposition groups say if drilling isn't safe near New York City's water source, it isn't safe in other communities, either.

On Monday, Bloomberg released a new study that finds additional natural gas supply and distribution infrastructure are needed to meet rising demand.

Reacting to Monday's demonstration, Brad Gill, executive director of the Independent Oil and Gas Association of New York, said New Yorkers want "data, science and reason," not "gimmicks, stunts and street theater," to frame a balance between environmental protection and future energy production.

Source URL (retrieved on *04/21/2015 - 12:05am*):
http://www.chem.info/news/2012/08/fracking-opponents-rally-ny-decision-nears?qt-most_popular=0