

Yoko Ono, Son Launch Anti-Fracking Coalition

ALEX KATZ, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Yoko Ono and her son, Sean Lennon, on Wednesday launched a coalition of artists, musicians and filmmakers who oppose hydraulic fracturing in New York state.

The formation of the group Artists Against Fracking was announced at a news conference in Manhattan with Ono, Lennon and Mark Ruffalo, who has long been outspoken on the issue. Other celebrities joining the coalition's cause include Lady Gaga, Paul McCartney and Alec Baldwin.

The group's formation comes as Gov. Andrew Cuomo prepares to decide whether to allow shale gas drilling using high-volume hydraulic fracturing — known as hydrofracking, or fracking — after four years of studying its health and environmental impacts. The process uses millions of gallons of chemically treated water to blast open gas-rich shale deposits deep underground.

Ono and Lennon are calling on the governor to ban drilling in New York, which they said can cause gas wells to leak harmful methane into water supplies. They said their group has requested a meeting with Cuomo to discuss the issue.

In a letter sent to Cuomo on Monday, Ono and Lennon called fracking "a danger to New Yorkers."

"Inevitably, the process leads to the release of toxic chemicals — many of which are unknown and unreported — into our air and water," they wrote.

The letter added: "It is a direct public health threat to families and communities."

Proponents argue that drilling and fracking in the Marcellus Shale formation, which covers large parts of Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio and West Virginia, promises to deliver relatively cheaper natural gas to close customers in the energy-hungry Northeast and create hundreds of well-paying jobs in an economically depressed region.

Cuomo is expected to allow drilling to begin on a limited basis near the Pennsylvania state line, though Ono said she is confident the governor and fracking supporters will eventually come around.

"Eventually logic will overcome everything," she said. "Logic and love."

The coalition is encouraging the public to pressure lawmakers to take action against fracking. Beyond that, Ono and Lennon told The Associated Press that their next steps largely depended on Cuomo's actions in the coming weeks.

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"It's much better to play it by ear," Ono said.

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