

OCCA applauds county board's actions

To the editor:

The Otsego County Conservation Association commends the Otsego County Board of Representatives for its June 3 resolution concerning the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's final scope for a draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement on oil, gas, and solution mining.

The resolution calls for a 60-day extension of the public comment period regarding the dSGEIS. Given the potential magnitude of the impact of horizontal drilling in our lands; that this procedure requires much research and scrutiny before drawing conclusions; and that impacts of horizontal drilling will be long-term, and perhaps irreversible, we heartily agree with this request. The Marcellus shale natural gases have been there for centuries and will still be available after this extension.

The resolution also calls for a "severance tax and adequate permit fees on gas drilling companies to pay the costs of such regulation and oversight." Since we all support the DEC through our taxes, we are all currently paying the DEC to review, permit and inspect drilling activities because fees assessed to the gas industry do not cover true costs of review. A severance tax would remove this burden from the taxpayers.

Finally, the county resolution asks the state to require "all substances intended to be introduced into wells be identified and the information be made public, with special notification to local emergency response personnel and health care providers, before use of such chemicals is permitted." The reason for this request is logical and self-evident.

We are pleased that the county had the foresight and political will to pass this resolution. We county residents to contact their elected state officials urging the same action regarding horizontal drilling as the county board did in its resolution.

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