



HEALTHY SCHOOLS NETWORK, INC.

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Child Health Groups Call for Robust Assessment of Hydrofracking Health Impacts: Concerned About School Drinking Water, Air Quality

(December 20, Albany, NY) - State and national children’s advocates and child health groups today called on New York State officials to broaden their assessments of the impacts of high volume hydraulic fracturing (hydrofracking) as a method of tapping underground natural gas deposits to include child health impacts and impacts on schools.

“What concerns us the most is the lack of an in-depth look at how children will be affected by hydrofracking,” said **Claire Barnett, Executive Director, Healthy Schools Network**. “This is a national issue, not just a New York issue. We are very pleased that New York has extended the public comment period and urge state officials to commit to producing an assessment of impacts on vulnerable children and on educational facilities.”

According to New York law, an environmental impact statement must include an assessment of an action’s impacts to human health. Unfortunately, a human health assessment is not part of the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) on hydraulic fracturing. “For our families, especially our children, we need to know how potential impacts are being assessed,” Barnett added. “That is the only way to develop effective mitigation procedures.”

Barnett and other press conference participants released a map indicating that over one hundred public P-12 public school facilities including 51 classroom buildings are located on Marcellus Shale and rely on private well water. In addition, she noted that the words “children”, “asthma”, and “learning disabilities” do not appear even once in the state’s draft EIS.

Said **George Dunkel, Executive Director, American Academy of Pediatrics District II**, “Children are

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New York's resources for the future. In addition to new nearby noises, traffic, chemical and contaminated waste storages, we are concerned about the exposure of these children, teachers and staff. We do not believe that the environmental impact studies conducted to date properly assess the potential danger. We support and join in the call on the state Health Department and State Education to engage with the Department of Environmental Conservation during the public comment period to conduct in-depth research on the impacts to children's health posed by hydraulic fracturing."

New York State PTA President Maria Fletcher said, "New York State PTA asks its members and communities to learn about the risks of hydrofracking and to advocate with decision-makers to protect the air, land, and water -- and the children of New York."

Roger Cook, retired Director, Western New York Committee on Occupational Safety and Health and Co-Chair, United Church of Christ/Disciples of Christ of Western New York Environmental Task Force said, "We strongly agree that the state must conduct a robust health impact assessment before it can address mitigations. A major concern is that the proposed hydrofracking waste water will be transported for treatment in Niagara Falls. There is no assurance that the local plant can manage the contaminants."

"The full impacts of hydraulic fracturing for natural gas on children's health – including changes in air and water quality as well as vehicular traffic accidents – should be better studied before New York moves ahead with wide scale use of this method," added **Phillip Landrigan, MD, Chairman, Department of Preventive Medicine and Professor of Pediatrics at Mount Sinai School of Medicine.**

"The potential short term economic benefit of increased jobs and fuel revenue from hydraulic fracturing for natural gas needs to be weighed against the long term economic risk of potential contamination of our state's water supply, and possible unnecessary and unintentional exposure of our state's children to those contaminants," said **Perry Sheffield, MD, Deputy Director, Mount Sinai Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit.** The national Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units' (PEHSU) fact sheet for parents on hydraulic fracturing is attached.

Both the federal National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) require health assessments of proposed actions impacting the environment. Over the last two years, New York State agencies and the Legislature have considered the impact of high volume hydraulic fracturing. Both the state Assembly and Senate have hosted public hearings, and this fall the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) issued a revised draft EIS. Initially, hydrofracking will take place only in the Marcellus Shale region that stretches across lower New York State, from the Catskills to Lake Erie. The Utica Shale which may also be tapped underlies the Marcellus Shale and also extends from northeast of the state capitol in Albany, west to Lake Ontario, and north to the Tug Hill Plateau.

Healthy Schools Network, a national not for profit founded in New York State in 1995 as an advocate for children and for healthy school environments that has won national awards for its work, undertook a preliminary study this fall to determine if and how the state took children's environmental health vulnerabilities into account, and to determine what impacts if any on P-12 public and private schools and child care facilities were anticipated. Surprisingly, in the state's 1,537 page draft EIS, there were no mentions of children, child care facilities, and childhood diseases like asthma, or learning disabilities. Schools are mentioned, but only as governmental units within counties.

The Network's study drew from data on public school facilities on file with the New York State Education Department; the Network did not attempt to locate data for private schools, or for public or private child care centers or Head Start facilities, which could also be at risk. The Network's Research Associate Jimmie Covington researched school data and child health issues; Program Coordinator Mollie Coleman produced the attached data summaries.

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Healthy Schools Network Recommendations

Because of the complexity and the importance of the issues, the Network recommends that New York State Department of Conservation, in concert with the Department of Health and the Education Department, conduct a robust human health impact assessment of the proposed hydrofracking in the Marcellus Shale region, including but not limited to:

1. developing and publicizing a map of all public and private P-12 schools, and all public and private child care centers and Head Starts in the Marcellus Shale region that currently rely on private well water;
2. assessing risks and detailing mitigations of potential threats to children where they live, learn, and play in the hydrofracking zone, including from noise, air and water pollution, traffic hazards, chemical mismanagement and spills, and hazardous waste disposal; and,
3. expanding the state agency mapping of at-risk educational facilities using private well water to the Utica Shale region as permits for drilling in that region are filed with DEC.

Links to resources

(if links do not open, cut and paste urls into your web browser)

- **Map of public school facilities in Marcellus Shale:** P-12 public school facilities relying on private well water on the Marcellus Shale. This includes classroom buildings, administrative offices and bus garages.

https://docs.google.com/open?id=0B-jj-Uqv_J65ZGYzYzI5NTgtZDhkOC00OWQ1LWJhNzItZWQxYWVlMTA0MjZi

Or, tiny link: <http://tiny.cc/diro0>

List of public school facilities in Marcellus Shale relying on private well water:

https://docs.google.com/open?id=0B-jj-Uqv_J65MWQ1NmI2ZGItYTcyOS00ZjQzLTlkMmYtYWZMzWQxYzAwNWEj

N.B. - *due to the complexities of the mapping software and how State Education records and reports individual school building conditions, some school facilities could not be plotted.*

School data summary and list of classroom buildings by county: P-12 public school classroom buildings relying on private well water on the Marcellus Shale, by county, with enrollment and school socio-economic data

https://docs.google.com/open?id=0B-jj-Uqv_J65MWUxMTMzMjctNGQ1Mi00MWQ3LWYyMTU0MjZi

http://www.aoc.org/pehsu/documents/hydraulic_fracturing_2011_parents_comm.pdf

- **Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit (PEHSU) fact sheet for parents and communities:**

http://www.aoc.org/pehsu/documents/hydraulic_fracturing_2011_parents_comm.pdf