NEWS
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor Joe Martens, Commissioner

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FACT SHEET: COMMUNITY & LOCAL IMPACTS OF HIGH-VOLUME HYDRAULIC FRACTURING

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation engaged a consultant to assist in its review of the socio-economic impacts that high-volume hydraulic fracturing operations could have on New York. The consultant also assisted DEC will its analysis of the cumulative transportation, community character, noise and visual impacts. The revised draft SGEIS proposes measures to mitigate substantial adverse impacts.

Transportation

To address impacts on roads and quality of life from truck traffic generated by high-volume hydraulic fracturing operations, DEC will require drillers to produce detailed transportation plans outlining the proposed number of trucks, truck routes and times of day of truck operations, and assessing road conditions along those proposed routes. These plans must be approved by DEC and the New York State Department of Transportation.

Based on the required baseline survey of local roads, drillers will have to ensure the roads can accommodate the proposed truck traffic generated by the activity, and, where applicable, produce road use agreements to show how roads will be upgraded or repaired to address the projected increased truck traffic generated by the drilling operations.

Community Character

To mitigate potential cumulative impacts to community character, the SGEIS proposes that DEC, in consultation with local governments, may limit simultaneous development of well pads and wells in proximity to each other. This approach would also help mitigate any noise impacts, visual impacts and impacts from increased truck traffic.

DEC will monitor the pace and concentration of development throughout the state and will consider additional measures to mitigate the adverse impacts at the local and regional levels. Where appropriate, and in consultation with local governments, DEC will impose specific construction windows within well construction permits to ensure drilling activity and cumulative impacts are concentrated in one specific area.

Noise

Noise impacts can be mitigated at nearby receptors by a combination of setbacks, site layout design that takes advantage of topography, noise barriers and special permit conditions. A multi-well pad provides the opportunity to locate the operation away from a sensitive noise receptor in a location where there is intervening topography and vegetation, which can reduce the noise level to the receptor. In addition, roads should be located as far as practicable from occupied structures and places of assembly to minimize traffic noise.

DEC will review proposed multi-well pads within 1,000 feet of occupied structures and places of assembly to determine what mitigation measures are necessary to minimize adverse noise impacts. For such sites, the applicant will also be required to conduct noise modeling to determine noise levels of the closest receptor so applicants can develop appropriate mitigation measures to control noise levels.

Noise mitigation techniques could include:

- establishing day and night noise level limits;
- using noise reduction equipment;
- limiting certain drilling activities to certain hours;
- installing temporary sound barriers; and
- limiting hydraulic fracturing operations to a single well at a time.

Visual

The analysis states the most significant visual impacts would occur during the construction and development of a well pad, making the impacts temporary in nature. The document recommends that site-specific measures could be implemented in visually sensitive areas in consultation with DEC. Such measures could include screening, relocation, camouflage or disguise, using non-reflective materials and controlling off-site migration of lighting. In addition, restoration activities during well production should significantly reduce visual impacts from HVHF operations.