

Comments on the 2009 New York State Energy Plan

I am impressed with the fact that NYS has undertaken the huge task of planning our energy future and balancing development of renewable energy sources, conservation, controlling greenhouse gases, protection of the environment and health and safety of the population. My comments are directed at Policy Goals 2, 4 and 5 to Reduce greenhouse gas emissions, Reduce health and environmental risks and Improve the State's energy independence by developing in-state energy resources:

I question grouping natural gas with renewable resources especially when relying on extraction of gas contained in the Marcellus Shale. The characterization of natural gas as a "clean" fossil fuel is misleading when one considers all of the resources required to extract natural gas from shale. Hydro-fracking requires an enormous use of energy to truck tons of chemicals and millions of gallons of water to drilling sites. The millions of gallons of water used to frack each well then needs to be trucked to treatment facilities and processed to extract radioactive materials from underground as well as chemicals using even more energy before it can be released into the environment. The safety of each part of the extraction and delivery process is fraught with potential hazards to the soil, the surface and sub-surface water, the health and safety of local populations, the workers and the air. Just today, the Sierra Club, Atlantic Chapter has called for a total ban on hydro-fracking in tight sands/shale in New York because of the risk to the environment already proven in other states where it has been used.

An article in the Oct. 15, 2009 New York Times describes the massive amounts of methane, the primary component of natural gas, released by leaks in natural gas pipelines and storage facilities as well as in the extraction of natural gas. Methane is an even more potent greenhouse gas than CO₂ and traps more heat. Unfortunately, the oil and gas industry is also exempt from federal regulations limiting greenhouse gas emissions in their natural gas operations.

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/15/business/energy-environment/15degrees.html?_r=2&hp

Also, characterizing natural gas as an "in-state" energy supply is misleading since most of the companies owning leases to drill in the Marcellus Shale are partly or largely foreign owned. The royalties and some short term jobs will be local but the profits will flow to out-of-state and international companies. There is also no assurance that the natural gas mined in NY will be sold to NY customers since the energy market is global and companies will sell wherever they can get the best price. Since NY has no depletion or severance tax there is no compensation to the state or local governments for the extraction of the resource.

Instead of concentrating our resources on developing renewable energy technology that will provide jobs and energy independence far into the future as well as permanently reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the Energy Plan suggests that NY increase the use of natural gas to fire electric plants and even automobiles. It is a mistake to increase reliance on a non-renewable, polluting energy source instead of putting all our effort into developing alternative sources that will meet our goals for the future long after the supply of gas is exhausted.

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