

Water group urges DEC to better protect area from gas drilling

“The moratorium should continue until such laws and regulations are in place.”

**— PHIL CIANCIOOTTO
PRESIDENT, SENECA LAKE PURE
WATERS ASSOCIATION**

By DAVID L. SHAW

dshaw@fltimes.com

GENEVA — The Seneca
Lake Pure Waters

Association says proposed
oil and gas drilling regulations
are “woefully inadequate.”

The association made
that point Monday in a 24-
page response to the state
Department of Environmental
Conservation about
the proposed supplemental
regulations.

“It does less to protect the
environment and our communities
than to facilitate
its exploitation for the natural
gas,” the association
said.

Association president
Philip Cianciotto and vicepresident
James Bromka
said the 800-plus-page DEC
draft is complex and vague
in its requirements “and
leaves much to the discretion
of regulators whose
numbers [are] far from adequate
to monitor and control
the expected boom in

drilling across the state,
once the moratorium is lifted.”

There is renewed interest
among energy companies in
drilling for natural gas
under a large deposit
known as the Marcellus
Shale, which lies under
much of the central Finger
Lakes.

The association and several
other environmental
groups are concerned about
the so-called “hydrofracking”
drilling method, which
involves injecting chemical-laden
water horizontally to
break up the shale and free
the natural gas.

Based on bad experiences
with the technology in
other states, the association
is asking the DEC, the governor
and the state

Legislature to redraft proper
regulations for better
control and oversight.

“Our response details
specific concerns in the area
of water sourcing; air, water
and noise pollution, waste
water handling and the
impact this drilling will
have on the infrastructure
and financial responsibilities
of local communities,”

Cianciotto said. “We urge
the DEC to clearly specify
tougher regulations in each
of these areas to protect
local environments and
municipalities.”

The Seneca Lake group
said another major issue is
the exemption that the oil
and gas industry enjoys
from seven major federal
environmental laws intended

to protect human health and the environment.

“In the absence of congressional action to correct those dangers to individual health and our environment in New York State, the DEC needs to provide tighter controls at the state level,” Bromka said.

The group said it supports drilling for natural gas, but only if it is environmentally and fiscally responsible — and not under the current DEC proposal.

The state should also ensure that municipalities are compensated through fees and taxes for any drilling-related costs they incur.

“This is not the situation today. The moratorium on drilling should continue until such laws and regulations are in place and supported by the general public,” Cianciotto said.

The association, which includes more than 250 property owners and residents in the Seneca Lake

watershed, was formed in 1991 to promote the understanding, preservation and improvement of the water quality, natural habitat and general environmental conditions of Seneca Lake and its watershed.

Its Web site is www.senecalake.org.

In related developments:

- The Steuben County Green Party is calling for a ban on hydrofracking, citing environmental concerns.

- The Yates County Legislature passed a resolution Nov. 9 recommending measures to minimize the negative impact of hydrofracking.

- The federal Environmental Protection Agency was directed by congressional resolution Oct.

29 to study the relationship between hydraulic fracturing and drinking water.

Public comments on the state’s draft regulations will be accepted until Dec.

31