



A DECISION SIX YEARS IN THE MAKING

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On December 17, 2014, Acting Commissioner of Health Howard A. Zucker released NYSDOH's Public Health Review of High Volume Hydraulic Fracturing (HVHF) for Shale Gas Development. This report is available at http://www.health.ny.gov/press/reports/docs/high_volume_hydraulic_fracturing.pdf. As you probably now know, NYSDOH recommended that HVHF should not proceed in New York State "until the science provides sufficient information to determine the level of risk to public health from HVHF to all New Yorkers and whether the risks can be adequately managed." Upon the release of these findings, NYSDEC Commissioner Joe Martens stated that he will issue a legally binding findings statement that will prohibit HVHF in New York State at this time.

Thus, on this day, the highly controversial environmental review process regarding HVHF (begun in 2008) reached a dramatic conclusion. Dr. Zucker indicated that "I have considered all of the data and find significant questions and risks to public health which as of yet are unanswered. I think it would be reckless to proceed in New York until more authoritative research is done. I asked myself, 'would I let my family live in a community

with fracking?' The answer is no. I therefore cannot recommend anyone else's family to live in such a community either."

So, is HVHF dead in New York forever? Not likely. As Commissioner Martens indicated recently the decision can be "revisited at any time when new or significant information comes to light." However, he indicated that "I don't think it's going to be revisited in the near term..." In the future, a number of studies will be released nationally in regards to HVHF. One of these will be a comprehensive USEPA study that is not expected to be completed before 2016. As more studies are released in the future, the issue may very well be revisited here in New York State.

To be honest, the looming possibility of HVHF in New York State has made my job easier over the past six years. As NYRWA's Source Water Protection Specialist, my job is to help communities protect their drinking water resources. The issue of HVHF has raised the awareness of local leaders and citizens regarding water resource protection. I hope that this new-found awareness of drinking water protection does not fade now that HVHF is prohibited in New York State. 💧💧💧