

NEW YORK

Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton

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Senator Clinton Urges Scrutiny of Regulations to Ensure Safe Drilling in Marcellus Shale Formation

Natural Gas Deposits Offer New Economic Opportunities but Drilling May Present Threats to Local Environment

WASHINGTON, DC – Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton today expressed her concerns regarding the potential environmental impacts of expanded natural gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale formation in New York. In a letter to Alexander M. Grannis, Commissioner of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), Senator Clinton recognized the benefits of drilling in New York, including economic development and an increase in domestic supply of a valuable energy source; but cautioned that it also presents threats to local water supplies, air quality, and roads and other infrastructure in the absence of adequate regulatory protections. Senator Clinton also praised the commitment of the NYSDEC to update the Environmental Impact Statement for drilling in the Marcellus formation, and stressed the critical role the State plays as a first line of defense in ensuring that proper environmental standards are maintained.

“The natural gas deposits in the Marcellus formation offer new revenue opportunities for landowners and communities throughout New York, and provide a means to increase our supply of this valuable energy source here at home. However it is essential that we do everything possible to evaluate and mitigate any potential threats that the drilling poses to our water and air quality,” said Senator Clinton. “With advancements in technology and experience from drilling in other states, there is no reason why we can not be good stewards of the environment while also harvesting the benefits of these natural gas deposits.”

Current federal protections are fairly weak and oil and gas companies have been granted exemptions from compliance with certain provisions of important federal environmental laws, including the Clean Water Act, the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, and the Community Right to Know Act.

A copy of Senator Clinton's letter to Commissioner Grannis is attached -

Mr. Alexander M. Grannis
Commissioner
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

625 Broadway
Albany, New York 12233

Dear Commissioner Grannis:

I write to express my concerns about the potential environmental impacts of expanded natural gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale formation in New York. Given my concerns, I am happy to learn that the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) is committed to updating the Environmental Impact Statement for drilling in the Marcellus Shale.

Expanded natural gas drilling can provide significant economic benefits to landowners and local economies, and can help to increase domestic supply of a valuable energy source. However, drilling also presents threats to local water supplies, air quality, and roads and other infrastructure in the absence of adequate regulatory protections. Unfortunately, current federal protections are fairly weak. Oil and gas companies have been granted exemptions from compliance with certain provisions of important federal environmental laws, including the Clean Water Act, the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, and the Community Right to Know Act.

These gaps in the federal environmental safety deserve closer scrutiny, and I am examining whether changes are needed. However, under current law, New York State law is the line of first defense, and the NYSDEC has an important role to play. In that regard, I appreciate the responsiveness of the NYSDEC to public concerns, and I strongly support your decision to hold public meetings and take public comment about how the Department should evaluate and mitigate the environmental impacts of horizontal drilling for natural gas in the Marcellus Shale formation. I also support your decision to require drilling permit applications to undergo a site-specific environmental review. Given advancements in technology and experience gained from drilling in other states, it is my belief that impacts can and should be mitigated.

We need to find an approach that will enable our communities to reap the economic benefits of drilling, but not at the expense of the environment. I look forward to working with you to ensure that we meet this goal.

Sincerely,

Hillary Rodham Clinton

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