

Comments on the Draft Hydraulic Fracturing Study Plan to be Undertaken by the Environmental Protection Agency

March 7, 2011

Distinguished men and women of the EPA Science Advisory Board. It is a privilege to address you today.

My name is Susan Oliver and my husband and I own land in upstate NY in the Marcellus Shale Region. When we first learned about the natural gas on our land, we were shocked and found ourselves completely ignorant of the issues surrounding its development. We set about on a journey to educate ourselves by researching the history, process, science. We have consulted experts in hydrogeology, geology, engineering, forestry, and plain old water. We have put what we have learned in the context of overall energy needs and uses. We have concluded that if you're not for natural gas, you're for coal. We see natural gas as a bridge to a more renewable-dense energy world. We believe the answer to our energy needs lies in a "super smart grid," one in which we are able to combine wind, solar and other renewables, and use natural gas as a back-up or foundation.

We see the development of natural gas in upstate NY as an answer to a problem we have been racking our brains to solve for the last 20 years – how to solve the dispiriting problem of economic despair in this beautiful, but economically destitute region. My husband grew up in Bainbridge, NY, which is a small town outside Binghamton. The town's main street wasn't always lined with boarded up store fronts and burned down homes. In the 1970s and 1980s, it was a prosperous place with multiple industries: with skilled jobs such as engineers and chemists, and plenty of manufacturing jobs as well. Supportive businesses thrived. And the residents never dreamed it would decline into despair. Each time we drive to and from this precious place, we'd find ourselves in a funk – wondering what it would take to ever lift up this town to a place of pride again.

When we learned about the potential of the Marcellus Shale, it felt like our prayers were answered. But what about the hysterical claims of entire households, towns, regions, flocks of birds and heads of cattle suffering the demise of hydraulic fracturing? We decided not to believe everything we read – and instead consulted with a cadre of experts who explained to us the process, showed us the science, and continue to inform us today of what's real and what's hype.

We learned that downstate NY, including Manhattan – should indeed be worried about their water supply. But that's NOW – having nothing to do with hydraulic fracturing or natural gas at all. Right now, today, downstate NY faces threats to their unfiltered water supply, such as leaky tanks underneath just about every gas station in and around the aquifer. And as for hydraulic fracturing using too much water? We learned that each and every day, more water leaks out of just one of the pipes that carries the water through the aquifer in NY – than it takes to hydraulic fracture a well that produces energy for 20 years.

We've been very disappointed to learn that so many of the issues which receive tremendous attention in the news and in the zeitgeist – use hydraulic fracturing as a scapegoat or a red herring. Yes, NY should worry about it's water supply. But hydraulic fracturing is not the problem.

Speaking of truths – I sincerely hope that this study will use Dimock, PA as a test site in the study. I would very much like to see the EPA test the water wells – so that it can communicate once and for all that the water contamination that occurred in Dimock resulted from methane migration from a faulty cement job – and has nothing to do with hydraulic fracturing.

If we are to find solutions, we have to deal with facts, and that to me, is the value of this study. Furthermore – as the EPA discovers truths, findings, facts, potentially compromised safety standards – I hope that this study affords an opportunity fo the EPA to alert the concerned public immediately. We don't want to open The New York Times and find out about critical information there instead.

I believe this study needs to be swift, precise, and well communicated. And I believe broadening the study undermines those tenets. The more broad and meandering the study becomes, the longer we will await results; the more drawn out the process; and the more diluted the communication will be.

I see the EPA as a critical partner in what it will take to move us from a struggling energy nation to a self-sustaining one. The EPA can do that by separating truth from fears, by communicating in a timely manner, and by focusing on the most critical aspects of the study and not risk getting bogged down in secondary and tertiary concerns.

What is clear to me from the thousands of hours I've spent poring over this is that given the opportunity and the right conditions, American innovation will kick-in. NY can't solve the wastewater treatment problems, because there is no Marcellus Shale development there yet! In the absence of commerce, how can problem-solving-service-oriented-inventive industry make advances if they are shut out of the state? I understand green fracking fluid may debut this year; we have read about the introduction of water recycling technology from GE. More and more use is being made of pipelines to move water and fluids to reduce truck traffic and the potential for spills.

The opportunity before us is tremendous. We are fortunate to witness a momentous time in our nation's energy history. We have the power to become self-sustaining. If state regulators tighten up regulations and monitor closely; if industry brings their A game and continues to improve every process; if landowners become educated and demand best practices in their leases and remain proper stewards of their land, and if the EPA can focus on bringing the best science to the study – if we work together – we can lead the world in energy.

President Obama has asked us to out-educate, out-innovate and out-build the rest of the world. We can start by allowing Marcellus Shale dollars to flow through NY's coffers and begin to relieve the \$9 Billion deficit. We can bring soliders home instead of sending

them to hostile nations to feed our \$1 Billion a day foreign oil habit. Let's create jobs and hope in NY. Let's engage colleges and university students in finding, creating and adopting better solutions to hydraulic fracturing.

Let's get innovating. Let's adopt green fracking fluid, find ways to save more trees, more land, and frack with fewer chemicals and less impact. Let's reduce the carbon in the air and the mercury in the fish.

EPA, bring the best minds to the table to study and uncover any problems with our drinking water. If it's real let's address it. But let's not delay or be swayed by special interests, politicians, junk science, or bad journalism.

Let's make a safe process even better. Remember: we can clean up our air, create jobs, bring soldiers home.

Let's access our abundance of natural gas and use it as a bridge to a renewable energy world. Let's build "super-smart grids" with solar, wind, other renewables, and natural gas as a backup.

Let's be pragmatic, smart, swift, transparent. But let's remember there are NYers and other Americans waiting – for jobs, for cleaner air, for domestic energy.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to share my thinking with you.