

Regional Plan Association

Testimony of Elizabeth Case
Research Associate, Regional Plan Association
Before the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Hearing on Hydraulic Fracturing
Tuesday, November 10, 2009, 6:30 pm
Stuyvesant High School, 345 Chambers Street, Manhattan

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Good evening. My name is Elizabeth Case. I am a research associate at Regional Plan Association, a non-profit research and planning organization that has promoted the quality of life and economic vitality of the New York Metropolitan Region for nearly a century. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on the proposal to permit hydraulic fracture drilling in New York State.

Regional Plan Association does not believe that drilling should be allowed at the current time.

Ensuring the long-term sustainability of New York City's drinking water by maintaining our water quality and avoiding the need for costly filtration must be the paramount concern in this process. As you know, high-volume hydraulic fracturing, "fracking" for short, is a drilling process where water and dangerous chemicals are injected at very high pressure into a location that has natural gas. We do not see an immediate need to endanger the quality of our 150 year-old drinking water system for the sake of short term rewards posed by natural gas extraction.

Moreover, drilling poses the risk of adding costly and unnecessary additions to our already tight City budget. If the drilling proposal is accepted, the City could be forced by the Federal Government to build a \$10 billion filtration plant. It is important to note that EPA could require such a step to offset even just the threat of contaminated waters. Consequently, City water rates could increase, affecting millions of New Yorkers.

As noted by an editorial in the *New York Times* just last week, "hydraulic fracturing has been implicated in a growing number of water pollution cases across the country." The public and the local media have reacted as well. Thousands of people have sent letters of concern to DEC and our elected leaders in Albany. Many individuals, members of the public like those here tonight, have expressed concerns by speaking up at New York State Assembly and New York City Council hearings. Even the Chair of Chesapeake Energy, the company that holds drilling rights in the disputed area, was quoted asking, "How could any one well be so profitable that it would be worth damaging the New York City water system?"

That said, we do not mean to say that drilling for natural gas in New York should be removed completely from the table. In the appropriate locations, with the right technology and safeguards, drilling could provide an important source of clean

energy. Only with the proper planning and regulations, though, could this drilling could be done in a safe manner. Until we are certain that the necessary standards can be met, we are not ready to support such a proposal.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify here today.