



## Winter Report

# Momentum builds to defend N.Y. from drilling

## Thousands join call for strong protections

New Yorkers are rallying behind our campaign to protect the Catskills and the rest of our state from gas drilling, and the pollution and destruction that inevitably come with it.

Our staff are talking to people across the state, educating New Yorkers about the threats drilling poses and urging them to get involved. Tens of thousands of New Yorkers from Ithaca to Westchester to the Upper West Side have joined the call. In December, Field Organizer Eric Whalen released a series of videos documenting how Marcellus Shale gas drilling has already impacted people's lives in Pennsylvania.

We've mobilized thousands of people to call, email or sign petitions to Gov. Andrew Cuomo, putting pressure on him to reverse course on a proposal to open more than 85 percent of New York to drilling. We've also turned out dozens of our members to public hearings on gas drilling to voice their disapproval of his plan.

### Victory keeps the Delaware safe, for now

While the fight to protect New York from gas drilling is far from over, in November we helped take a heartening step toward protecting the Catskills—and our drinking water—from drilling.

After months of deliberation, the Delaware River Basin Commission chose to delay a proposal that would open the Delaware River—and the drinking water



Doug Kent, Flickr

▲ *The Delaware River, pictured here in Halcottsville, N.Y., will remain off limits to drilling.*

for 15 million people (including 9 million New Yorkers)—to harmful Marcellus Shale gas drilling.

The DRBC is made up of representatives from every state through which the Delaware River runs, as well as one representative from the Obama administration. We won by the skin of our teeth—the representative from the Obama administration joined those from New York

and Delaware to voice their disapproval of putting the Delaware River at risk of pollution and development from gas drilling, forcing the pro-drilling minority to delay the vote.

Unfortunately, the fight isn't over. Gas drilling companies like ExxonMobil and Halliburton will continue to press the DRBC to open up the river to dangerous Marcellus Shale gas drilling.



## more online

◀ Visit our website to watch videos documenting how Marcellus gas drilling has impacted people's lives in Pennsylvania:

[www.EnvironmentNewYork.org/page/NYE/marcellus-shale-stories](http://www.EnvironmentNewYork.org/page/NYE/marcellus-shale-stories)



## To our members

I've got good news, bad news and better news. First the good news. As we closed the book on 2011, we celebrated a step toward protecting the Delaware River, a major drinking water source, from the threat of toxic gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale—at least for now.

The bad news? The gas industry continues to spend time and money in Albany to convince state leaders to open the Catskills, the Delaware and the rest of New York to dangerous gas drilling.

Fortunately, there's better news. From Manhattan to the Mohawk Valley, New Yorkers are demanding that our leaders protect our state from drilling. And the best news of all? We know that New Yorkers from all walks of life care deeply about our environment, our health and the places we love. No matter how powerful the gas industry may be, when people come together to defend our environmental values, we almost always find a way to win. Thanks for joining us.

Anna Aurilio  
Federal Legislative Director

## Recent action

### 54.5 mpg standard nears finish line

This summer, the Obama administration announced a plan to require cars and trucks to meet a 54.5 miles per gallon standard by 2025.

The standards would mark the single biggest step this country has ever taken to cut global warming pollution. By reducing oil consumption, the proposed standards would also generate an annual savings of \$1.4 billion at the pump by 2030 in New York alone. In November, the administration opened a public comment period on the proposed standards.

Unfortunately, with the National Auto Dealers Association lobbying to weaken the new standards and some of their allies in Congress vowing to block it altogether, this victory is not yet a done deal. Environment New York's staff and citizen members are urging the Obama administration to seize this important opportunity to get America off oil and stop global warming.

### Congress threatens New York's air, water

Over the past year, anti-environmental extremists in Congress have launched an all-out attack on the laws that protect New York's air quality and our waterways, from Long Island Sound to the Hudson River.

In the U.S. House alone, lawmakers cast an incredible 191 roll call votes in 2011 on measures that would block the EPA from keeping our waters clean, making our air safer to breathe, or enforcing other environmental protections.

So far, none of these attacks have become law, with Environment New York's research, advocacy and grassroots action helping to hold the line. In 2011, we released several reports that helped spotlight the consequences of lowering our guard against pollution. At the same time, we made our case to members of New York's congressional delegation here and in Washington, D.C. Our members have called, emailed or petitioned their lawmakers to reject any bills that threaten our state's air and water.

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▲ In 2011, House lawmakers cast 191 roll call votes on anti-environment measures, including ones that would allow more air and water pollution for New York.

# Danger in the air: N.Y. 8th-smoggiest state

The air in New York was unhealthy to breathe on at least 30 days in 2010, making it the nation's eighth-smoggiest state, according to a recent report by the Environment New York Research & Policy Center. Sadly, both New York City and Long Island ranked among the nation's top 20 smoggiest large metropolitan areas.

The report, entitled "Danger in the Air," ranked states and local communities and tabulated the number of days on which it was dangerous for children, the elderly and people with respiratory diseases like asthma to be outside breathing the air.

## Public not always alerted

On days with elevated levels of air pollution, people with respiratory illnesses suffer the most. This includes our communities' most vulnerable populations, like children and the elderly. Children who grow up in areas with high levels of smog may develop diminished lung capacity, putting them at a greater risk of lung disease later on in life.

"New Yorkers deserve clean air. But on far too many days, people in the New York City and Long Island areas are exposed to dangerous smog pollution," said Eric Whalen, Environment New York's field organizer. "For the sake of our children, we must make every day a safe day to breathe."

Environment New York's research also included new data showing that the problem is even worse than the public thought. For example, research shows that on 14 days in 2010, residents in New York City were exposed to smog levels that were found to be dangerous to breathe—but because of outdated federal air quality rules, the public was never alerted to unhealthy air levels.

Other metropolitan areas across the state were exposed to additional high-smog, no-alert days, including Long Island (12 days), Jamestown (10 days), and eight other metropolitan areas detailed in the report.

## A call to clean the air we breathe

The report came as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency considers new public health protections from smog pollution, which would dramatically cut smog from across the country and reduce the number of unhealthy air days in New York.

Environment New York Research & Policy Center released our report's findings at a press event outside of New York City Hall alongside State Assemblymembers Linda B. Rosenthal, Alan Maisel and Felix Ortiz. Peggy Shepard, the executive director of West Harlem Environmental Action, and Dr. Paul Ehrlich of the New York Allergy and Asthma Society also joined us.

"New York City is well known for its innovation, and we pride ourselves on being ahead of the curve on a number of issues, including environmental issues. That's why it is distressing that New York City was ranked one of the top five smoggiest metropolitan areas in the country in 2011," said Assemblymember Rosenthal. "Our children deserve better, and frankly, we can and must do better to ensure the safety of the air we breathe."



## Report release

New York State Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal spoke at a press event for our report, "Danger in the Air." Read the full report: [www.EnvironmentNewYorkCenter.org](http://www.EnvironmentNewYorkCenter.org)



## Questions for EPA

### Administrator Lisa Jackson

EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson is the top-ranking environmental official in the nation. Our staff sat down with her to discuss the EPA's priorities.

**The EPA has recently worked on several clean air standards, including the Mercury and Air Toxics Standard and the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule. Can you explain what these standards mean for American families?**

*These new Clean Air Act standards mean cleaner, healthier air for American families. The Mercury and Air Toxics Standard and the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule are part of a series of commonsense steps under the Clean Air Act to reduce emissions of mercury, acid gas, particulate matter, arsenic and other harmful chemicals from some of the biggest polluters in the nation. These reasonable steps will provide dramatic protections to our children and loved ones—they will save tens of thousands of lives and prevent hundreds of thousands of asthma and heart attacks.*

**What's the best way for our members to express their opinions on these issues?**

*Unfortunately, we are at a point where we have to remind some leaders in Washington to put the health of their constituents above the wish lists of special interests. Speaking directly to those who want to undermine commonsense environmental protections is one of the best ways to stand up for your right to clean air and clean water.*

For the full interview, visit [www.EnvironmentNewYork.org/page/NYE/Lisa-Jackson-interview](http://www.EnvironmentNewYork.org/page/NYE/Lisa-Jackson-interview)

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# Environment New York

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Clean air. Clean water. Open space.

## Environment New York

### Our mission

We all want clean air, clean water and open space. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress.

That's the idea behind Environment New York. We focus exclusively on protecting New York's air, water and open spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

## EPA moves to limit Marcellus air pollution

With public concern in New York intensifying over Marcellus Shale gas drilling, the Environmental Protection Agency has proposed new rules to curb harmful air emissions—linked to asthma and respiratory illness—from oil and gas operations. In order to show broad public support for this proposal, Environment New York worked with groups across the nation to deliver tens of thousands of comments to the EPA in support of their efforts.

The proposal is the first step toward protecting communities from air pollution released by oil and gas drilling. The EPA estimates the proposed amendments will result in massive reductions in air pollution from gas drilling, including reducing smog-forming pollution by 540,000 tons, equal to an industry-wide reduction of 25 percent. Studies have shown that air pollution from gas drilling threatens public health. For example, Wyoming's rural Sublette County is home to only 9,000 residents but thousands of gas wells. The county now suffers from unhealthy air pollution more commonly associated with big cities like Los Angeles, which can cause respiratory problems in vulnerable populations, including children and the elderly.



Tim Shaffer

◀ Gas drilling operations are leading to increased air pollution in communities across the nation.

To tackle this issue, Environment New York is supporting the EPA's proposal to update air pollution standards for thousands of gas drilling wells across the United States.