

Environmentalists Call for More ‘Fracking’ Hearings

Andrew Restuccia, Washington Independent, 8-11-10

Just a day after the Environmental Protection Agency delayed a hearing in upstate New York on the controversial practice of hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking,” environmental groups are calling on the agency to extend the public comment period and schedule more hearings on the drilling practice.

Hydraulic fracturing is a process whereby water, sand and chemicals are injected into the ground in order to access natural gas reserves. Environmentalists argue that the chemicals used in fracking can contaminate the water supply. They have argued for more regulation and for disclosure of the chemicals used in the process. But many natural gas companies have been resistant to disclosure, arguing that the information is proprietary.

EPA was supposed to hold a hearing in upstate New York on Thursday, but rescheduled the hearing until next month. The hearings are meant to gather public input on a study the EPA is conducting on fracking. The environmentalists want the Sept. 1 comment period deadline extended now that the hearing has been postponed.

“Citizens and environmental organizations statewide urge the EPA to reschedule the hearings promptly and to officially extend the public comment period to ensure that all comments are fully considered,” a statement from the groups says. The groups also call for more fracking hearings.

The call for an extension was endorsed by the following environmental groups: Catskill Mountainkeeper, Citizens Campaign for the Environment, Earthworks Oil & Gas Accountability Project, Environmental Advocates of New York, FrackAction and Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter.