February 24, 2020

A.9678 (Englebright)/S.6906 (Metzger)

Purpose of Bill: To permanently ban horizontal drilling, high-volume hydraulic fracturing, and gelled propane hydraulic fracturing.

Statement of Support: Five years ago, Governor Cuomo sent shock waves across the globe by banning fracking in New York. This line in the sand, reinforced by years of legislative intervention on the fracking issue, changed the trajectory of our state’s energy policy and led to more ambitious goals, including making New York carbon neutral by 2050. Fracking involves injecting water, sand and chemicals into rock formations at extremely high pressure, separating rock fissures and releasing natural gas and/or oil. Other states that have embraced this form of gas extraction have experienced contaminated water, polluted air, and adverse human health effects.

In fact, the prohibition on high-volume hydraulic fracking in New York was based upon findings that the gas extraction process was an unmitigable danger to public health and has since been reaffirmed in more than a thousand additional peer-reviewed scientific studies that document respiratory illnesses, water contamination, birth defects, cancers and other health problems. While the ban has withstood court challenges and regulatory end-arounds, like recent attempts to get well drilling permits to frack with gelled propane instead of water, it is hard to ignore the powerful interests still keen on reversing this historic prohibition. Enshrining the fracking ban in law will ensure that the state can continue to move forward in protecting our air, water and public health, while we build a better renewable energy future.

S.6906 corresponds with the Governor’s proposal to codify the fracking ban in the budget (Part WW of the 2021 TED) which brings us encouragement that a final agreement on a statutory prohibition can be met this year. The Senate’s proposal includes language that would also ban propane fracking, a process that presents many of the same unacceptable environmental impacts – but has not been expressly banned by the DEC. We urge any final agreement include this language.

We codified the State’s ambitious climate goals in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act – it’s now time make New York’s fracking ban permanent as well.

The Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter Strongly Urges Your Support of A.9678/S.6906.