



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on January 4, 2013

Fracking Is OK, Says Buried Report From New York State's Health Department

A report favoring fracking that was buried for nearly a year [was given to the New York Times](#) yesterday by a whistleblower who “did not believe it should be kept secret,” according to Danny Hakim. The eight-page analysis summarizes “previous research [done] by the state and others, and concludes that [fracking](#) can be done safely.” Specifically, the report says:



By implementing the proposed mitigation measures, the Department expects that human chemical exposures during normal [fracking] operations will be prevented or reduced below levels of significant health concern.

The report went on to say that further study of the risks would be worthless because it would “involve making a large number of assumptions about the many ... variables that influence the nature and degree of potential human exposure and toxicity.”

The report puts New York Governor [Andrew Cuomo](#) (shown) in a tough spot. On one side are the landowners over the [Marcellus Formation](#) in the southwestern parts of the state who have been leasing their land to drilling companies anxious to explore the potential of the formation. On the other are the environmentalists who are concerned about the risks of such exploration and the potential impact on people and the environment.

Cuomo has delayed making a decision on whether to allow fracking for nearly four years while an environmental study was being completed. Back in September Cuomo was about to allow some limited exploring, [but at the last minute](#), he reversed course, ordering another full-scale study of the matter, which would put off making a decision for at least another year.

This pleased Cuomo's good friend Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., an environmental activist whose sister just happens to be Cuomo's ex-wife. Kennedy said at the time that he was delighted with Cuomo's continued resistance to landowners and drilling companies who wanted to get started with the drilling:

I'm surprised how long he's withstood the tide. I'm proud that he's done that. There's no other governor who's just said “let's hold off.” And he's under, I can tell you, tremendous pressure by the industry and by others.

With the release of the long-buried report, that pressure is only going to increase. The Marcellus Formation is [almost incomprehensibly large](#), extending nearly 600 miles from the Finger Lakes region of New York south and west into and through western Pennsylvania, down through Maryland and into West Virginia. When the U.S. Geological Survey studied the formation back in 2002, it concluded that, with the then-existing technology, there was 2 trillion cubic feet (TCF) available for recovery. In 2009, it revised its estimate to 262 TCF. Translated into dollars, Marcellus has about \$200 billion dollars' worth



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of recoverable reserves. And that, according to a study funded by the Marcellus Shale Coalition, translates into 250,000 new jobs. If Cuomo lifts the ban in drilling, Marcellus [could create \\$11.4 billion in economic output](#) and raise \$1.4 billion in state and local taxes, according to the Manhattan Institute.

Fracking has already proven to be an important part of the U.S. economy, [having created 1.7 million jobs last year alone](#) with an additional 2.5 million jobs expected within the next three years.

The risks that the environmentalists are concerned about and are holding Cuomo hostage over are the risks that the fracking process could possibly pollute aquifers and wells. But according to Ronald Bailey at *Reason* magazine, [the risks are minimal](#):

If oil and gas production actually resulted in detectable health risks, it would already be apparent. Why? Because something like 75,000 conventional oil and gas wells have been drilled in New York since the late 1800s, and 14,000 of them are still active.

But the environmentalists aren't interested in logic or aren't listening. One of the more boisterous is [Frack Free Nation](#), which notes its opposition on its website with the following declarations, capital letters and exclamation points included:

Criminalize Shale Gas Extraction!

Regulations DO NOT prevent pollution.

Regulations ENABLE POLLUTION!

Regulators are trained and employed to ISSUE PERMITS — for pollution!

Then they asses [sic] monitory [sic!] fines for violations and spills — if we are lucky!!...

Therefore, these permits and associated regulations are CAUSING pollution.

The FACT is that this industry has a HORRIBLE safety record, which has left a toxic legacy everywhere it has gone.

The only way to stop the violations and stop the environmental destruction is by PROHIBITION...

Diatribes by some environmentalists remind one of [the advice an old lawyer gave to his son](#):

If you have a case where the law is clearly on your side, but the facts and justice seem to be against you, urge upon the jury the vast importance of sustaining the law.

On the other hand, if the law is against you, or doubtful, and the facts show that your case is founded in justice, insist that justice be done though the heavens fall.

But, said the young man, how shall I manage a case where both the law and the facts are dead against me?

In that case, talk around it, and the worse it is, the harder you pound the table.

With the release of this conveniently long-lost study, no amount of table pounding is likely to change the conclusion: Fracking is safe, and Cuomo won't be able to delay the inevitable much longer.

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