

State taps experts for fracking review

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ALBANY — The state has identified three experts from major universities who will soon begin assessing its plan for large-scale hydraulic fracturing.

Top faculty members from George Washington University, the University of California, Los Angeles and the Colorado School of Public Health have been tapped to review the state's proposed guidelines for hydrofracking, according to a list obtained Thursday by Gannett's Albany bureau.

The experts have been told their work should be wrapped up by "mid-February at the latest," said Lynn Goldman, dean of George Washington University's School of Public Health and Health Services, one of the three selected by the state.

That would push the state's proposed hydrofracking regulations past a Nov. 29 deadline, which would require them to be reopened to public comment.

In late September, state Health Commissioner Nirav Shah was tasked with reviewing a Department of Environmental Conservation report on high-volume hydrofracking, a technique in which water, sand and chemicals are injected into deep formations like the Marcellus Shale to fracture the rock and release natural gas.

Shah's review is nearing completion and will soon be sent to the outside experts, health department spokesman Bill Schwarz confirmed. Permits for hydrofracking with more than 300,000 gallons can't be issued in New York until the DEC's report — known as the Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement — is finalized.

Along with Goldman, the other university officials who will assess Shah's work are John Adgate, chair of the Environmental and Occupational Health Department at the Colorado School of Public Health; and Richard Jackson, chair of the Department of Environmental

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Health Sciences at UCLA's Fielding School of Public Health.

Adgate was a co-author of a widely circulated Colorado School of Public Health study in March that found fracking may have contributed to health problems for those living near gas wells. The results were based on three years of monitoring gas wells, and "future study is warrant-

ed," the report found.

Goldman headed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances during the Clinton administration.

Energy in Depth, a gas industry-funded group, knocked the selections, pointing to the Colorado study and a Huffington Post article authored by Goldman that called for further study of hydrofracking's health effects.

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