

# DEC: No drilling near two Finger Lakes

Hemlock,  
Canadice  
appear safe

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Reacting to outcry over the possibility of oil and gas wells near pristine Hemlock and Canadice lakes, state officials said Tuesday that they have “no intention” of allowing drilling in the state forest there.

But they’re not in a position now to make an ironclad promise. Later, they could be.

Environmentalists have been up in arms since the release in mid-February of the draft of a management plan for the Hemlock-Canadice State Forest. As the *Democrat and Chronicle* reported

Monday, the plan said the state would consider proposals for oil and gas drilling in the 6,700-acre forest and included glowing language about the benefits of oil and gas production.

Those statements seemed to contradict the popular perception that the land around Hemlock and Canadice, the only two undeveloped Finger Lakes and the source of drinking water for the city of Rochester and other communities, would remain protected and undisturbed.

Environmentalists are planning to pack a public meeting on the management plan scheduled for March 14 in Springwater, Livingston County.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation tried to quench the fire by issuing a statement Tuesday saying it

was highly unlikely oil and gas companies could ever dip a toe in those waters.

“The state has no intention of allowing any sort of drilling in the Hemlock-Canadice State Forest,” the statement said.

However, it was appropriate to include language about drilling in the draft management plan, spokeswoman Emily DeSantis said.

The idea is to cite all possible uses of the state forest land and solicit public comment on all of them. As a rule, New York’s state forests are not off-limits to such things as timber harvesting, mining and oil and gas exploration.

“We’re going through the management plan process right now,” she said. “As part of that process, we have to evaluate

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## DEC STATEMENT

everything.”

Asked whether the process could allow DEC to issue a final management plan that included a flat-out ban on drilling in the forest, DeSantis said simply “yes it could.”

The DEC statement Tuesday noted that the agency’s proposed regulatory guidelines for the technique that oil and gas companies would most like to use in New York — high-volume horizontal hydraulic fracturing —

would bar drilling near public water supplies and in state forests.

But as environmentalists have pointed out, the guidelines have been under review and revision for five years, and no one can predict when or if they would be put into effect.

Traditional vertical wells are not covered by the DEC’s proposed regulatory guidelines and could be placed in state forest lands.

But the DEC statement said the nature of Hemlock and Canadice — surrounded by steep slopes, used as drinking water supplies and ringed by protected wetlands — would make the agency unlikely to grant a drilling permit there.

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