

# No timetable on fracking review

## Cuomo happy with DEC's approach

**Jon Campbell**  
Albany Bureau

ALBANY — Gov. Andrew Cuomo declined Monday to put a timetable on a newly added layer of New York's ongoing review of hydraulic fracturing, but he said the additional assessment could help protect the state from lawsuits.

The state's Department of Environmental Conservation last week announced the Department of Health would review its findings regarding high-volume hydraulic fracturing before determining whether it can move forward in New York. The move is expected to add time to the

The first-term Democrat praised the DEC's recent announcement, which revealed that Health Commissioner Nivraj Shah would review the state's ultimate findings with advice from outside experts. Environmental and medical groups had called for an outside, nongovernmental group to conduct a comprehensive health study before a decision on hydrofracking is made.

Cuomo said the DEC was taking an "intelligent approach" and was working diligently to ensure a decision was not susceptible to a lengthy legal challenge.

"Yes, we'll avail ourselves to advice and opi-

nions from outside experts, but it's up to government," he said.

Reaction to the partnership between the DEC and the Health Department has been mixed. Bill Cooke, director of government relations for Citizens Campaign for the Environment, said that if the Health Department's assessment is done "honestly," it should focus on the cumulative impacts of gas wells and continue "into next summer."

"We welcome any prudent use of time," Cooke said. "At the end of the day, this is the biggest environmental issue in 100 years and it has the potential to affect the individual health and financial well-being of every property owner in a huge area, so taking their time is a

smart move." The DEC first launched its review of high-volume hydrofracking in July 2008, and the technique has remained on hold in New York ever since. It involves the use of large quantities of water, sand and chemicals injected deep underground to fracture shale formations, such as New York's Marcellus Shale, and release natural gas.

James Smith, a spokesman for the Independent Oil & Gas Association of New York, said the trade group has confidence in state officials to carry out a fair process, but ultimately it would be up to individual gas companies to decide whether they can do business in the state.

"I don't think they know at this time," Cuomo said. "The DEC is using the Department of Health to identify some outside experts to do the review, and I'm sure when they have an estimate, they'll tell us."

JCAMPBELL1@Gannett.com  
Twitter.com/JonCampbellIGAN

"We take the governor