

## Protect Rochester's drinking water

Written by Sandra L. Frankel  
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The Rochester region depends upon Hemlock and Canadice Lakes, which provide 38 percent of the drinking water supplied to customers by the Monroe County Water Authority. Oil and gas extraction within and underneath the watershed land holds the potential for serious contamination that could endanger our most precious natural resource: fresh, clean drinking water.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation's [Draft Unit Management Plan](#) for Hemlock and Canadice Lakes includes written statements that oil and gas drilling may be permitted, yet [DEC staff says this is highly unlikely](#). Who and what are we to believe? The draft creates a loophole that leaves the door open to drilling with no guaranteed protections for the watershed. What we need is real protection of our drinking water supply, not likely scenarios.

New York State plans to ban hydrofracking in the Syracuse and New York City watersheds. Are we in the greater Rochester area second class citizens? Has the DEC forgotten Love Canal? Yes, the technical details are different, but the bottom line is the same: water equals life, and contaminated water equates to huge costs in human suffering, remediation, property values and quality of life.

Hydrofracking is not ready for prime time in New York, and an important source of our drinking water cannot be exposed to this heavy industrial activity. That's why both the management plan and regulations, if approved, must include [a written prohibition against oil and gas drilling](#) within and under the Hemlock and Canadice Lakes watershed.

The state must have a clear and consistent public policy for management of the Hemlock and Canadice watershed properties, must close the pernicious loophole, and must put our health and safety first.

The Hemlock and Canadice Lakes watershed properties are the only two remaining undeveloped Finger Lakes. After the city of Rochester sold this property to New York state, the land was designated [Hemlock-Canadice State Forest](#). The agreement was to ensure that this unique area would continue to provide superior drinking water to Rochester, Brighton and other nearby areas, and that it would be protected in perpetuity. It now appears that designation as a state forest is not enough. Designation as a State Nature and Historic Preserve would secure this intent.

A rational vision for our region's future must ensure that vital economic development does not compromise our health and safety. That's why our most important natural resource, fresh clean drinking water, must be protected firmly, formally and with finality in writing.

Frankel is former Brighton town supervisor.