

# OPINION

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### HIS VIEW

## Natural gas and water

The production of natural gas intersects with water in two ways: the protection of the surface water table; and the use of water in hydraulic fracturing.

In New York State, the Department of Environmental Conservation has promulgated regulations virtually guaranteeing the protection of surface, fresh water supplies. For 30 years (from 1979-2009) when the state had a viable natural gas industry, the DEC issued over 10,000 permits to drill natural gas wells. There was only one documented case of migration of methane into a fresh water supply. That is an excellent record in anyone's book, and the DEC's proposed regulations for shale drilling are even tougher. There is no incentive for a natural gas production company to make "short-cuts" on such rules. The protection of fresh water supplies benefits everyone.

The other, and more talked about matter, is the use of water in hydraulic fracturing. Though hydraulic fracturing has been an approved practice in New York for at least 40 years, it has come into renewed focus because it is essential in unlocking the natural gas trapped in shale formations. If these shales, deep in the earth, are not fractured by water and propped open by sand which is pumped along with the water ... they will not give up their natural gas reserves. Thus, by definition, if you stop hydraulic fracturing - you stop natural gas production. So, logically, the opponents of natural gas have lobbied against stimulating shale with water as a political means to shut down the natural gas industry.

In other states, strides have been made to address the public concerns about how water is used in hydraulic fracturing. Lists have been promulgated of how much water and sand are used and what chemical additives are employed

(largely consisting of soap or "surfactants" to reduce friction when pumping the water.) Pipelines have been laid as a substitute for trucking water to drilling locations.

However, perhaps the biggest breakthrough has been in the recycling of water used in hydraulic fracturing. Some natural gas production companies in Pennsylvania are now filtering and recycling 100 percent of the water which is recaptured from the process.

Undoubtedly, additional improvements and efficiencies can and will be made in the manner in which shale rock is stimulated to produce natural gas. There is a common interest between the industry, the general public, and environmental oversight agencies to insure that the safest and best practices are adopted when water is used to produce natural gas.

What is not in the public interest is to blindly stop natural gas production by saying "No" to hydraulic fracturing. By 2015, the Marcellus Shale in the Northeastern United States will account for 25 percent of all natural gas consumed in the country. Because of dramatic increases in both oil and natural gas production from shale, the United States is less dependent on Middle East oil than we have been in 50 years.

Though New Yorkers consume more than 1 trillion cubic feet of natural gas per year to heat our homes and run our electric plants, we expect others to produce it. This needs to change. New York needs to be a producer as well as a consumer of natural gas.

*Roland Kidder was a Democratic member of the New York State Assembly (1975-82) and of its Environmental Conservation Committee; and is a former owner and CEO of a Western New York natural gas exploration and production company.*

### HIS VIEW

## Beware of a tick near you

Lyme disease, once considered mostly a "downstate" concern, is now a growing public health threat across Upstate New York.

In recent weeks, as we've entered the height of tick season, we've heard public health officials in Yates and other area counties issue warnings about this debilitating illness that affects hundreds of thousands of Americans annually.

So while it didn't receive the attention it deserved in the closing days of this year's legislative session in Albany a little over a week ago, the State Senate Task Force on Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases released an important report that we hope will continue to spark and guide the development of federal- and state-level action plans to address the rising concern.

Approximately 300,000 Americans are diagnosed with Lyme disease annually, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More than 450 new cases of Lyme disease have been reported in New York State alone so far in 2014. And that number is expected to continue rising each year as disease-laden ticks spread to more and more communities.

In fact, the new Senate report, based upon statistics from the state Department of Health (DOH), identifies Chemung, Schuyler and other regional counties as having experienced dramatic increases in cases of



TOM O'MARA

Lyme disease.

Lyme is a debilitating disease that should be taken seriously by everyone who enjoys the outdoors, even if it's just while doing yard work or gardening. Those who suffer from Lyme disease can endure years of frustration seeking effective diagnosis and treatment. We're trying to encourage and implement a comprehensive response. We want to raise awareness and enhance prevention and treatment strategies.

The Senate created its Task Force on Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases last October. Since then, the Task Force has reviewed research, consulted with experts, received public input and worked to develop legislation and other recommendations that we hope will be incorporated into a New York State Action Plan on Lyme and Tick-borne Diseases. This action plan would be similar in purpose and scope to the one created by the state DOH in 2001 to address the outbreak of West Nile Virus. It would serve as a comprehensive roadmap for the state to prevent additional illnesses by improving research, education, diagnosis and treatment.

The Senate report includes a comprehensive set of recommendations focusing on the need for additional research and data about past, current and future disease trends; increased public awareness as the reach of the diseases spread to new communities; implementation of preventive measures; and measures to enhance diagnosis and treatment.

The report's recommendations also include several other important research initiatives aimed at prevention and providing a better understanding of tick-borne diseases, which can be fatal. Other recommendations call for a public education campaign, opportunities for continuing medical education, and a county learning collaborative. The collaborative is designed to partner counties in the state who have been at the epicenter of this epidemic with counties who are just beginning to experience outbreaks as the diseases move north and west in order to encourage the sharing of best practices.

Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, the Task Force will convene a statewide conference later this year to bring together numerous universities, including Cornell University, and institutes from across the state already working on Lyme and other tick-borne diseases. The conference will focus on building collaboration and data sharing between the research community

and the state DOH, and increasing access to federal research grants. We're hopeful that it will jump start even more action.

As stated in the executive summary of our recent report, "The geographic spread of Lyme and Tick-Borne diseases demand a comprehensive response by the State to encourage detection and prevention initiatives, and facilitate diagnostic and treatment advancements. While the impact of Lyme disease is widespread, a large number of the cases remain unreported.

This lack of reporting is a cause of concern given that Lyme disease remains the most prevalent Tick-Borne disease in New York State. As such, the Task Force recommendations include various initiatives to help assist the Department of Health increase reporting and data collection in the State."

The full report is available through my Senate website, [www.omara.nysenate.gov](http://www.omara.nysenate.gov) by clicking on the "Combating Lyme Disease" icon in the left-hand column of the home page.

Additional information, including prevention tips, is available from the state Health Department at:

<http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/lyme/>

*State Sen. Tom O'Mara, R-Big Flats, represents New York's 58th Senate District, which includes Steuben, Chemung, Schuyler and Yates counties, and part of Tompkins County.*

### ANOTHER VIEW



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### HIS VIEW

## Celebrating sports as economic boost

From pristine lakes and gorgeous waterfalls to historic sports venues and some of the country's greatest wines, everyday serves as a constant reminder to why New York's Finger Lakes are a premier destination for tourism in the United States. Year round the region offers family friendly events for everyone from the wine enthusiast to the high octane racing fan.

The Empire State has been privileged to host some of the world's

biggest events at world-class venues. From Broadway to the Yankee stadium and beyond, these venues have become synonymous in the minds of tourists with the best in entertainment. Every year fans from around the world flock to sell out games and shows, which in turn helps drive revenue to communities across the state.

Professional sports stadiums play a prominent role in New York's tourism industry as the state is home to some of the most historic teams and stadiums. Far beyond sports

many of these stadiums host everything from major music festivals to local charity events.

However, one does not need travel to New York City to see how these venues are providing New York communities with more than just a fun place to go. For the past 65 years, Watkins Glen International has served as an economic engine for New York State tourism. It is a driving force for countless charitable, community service, jobs creation and economic development initiatives. While not as widely

recognized as some other sporting venues, the impact that The Glen has had on this community is just as profound.

Annually it is estimated that The Glen has a total economic impact of more than \$204 million, including \$40 million in federal, state and local taxes. Over the past 10 years The Glen has provided jobs to more than 2,057 local residents. During the highly anticipated NASCAR Sprint Cup weekend in August, more than 100,000 people stay in

SEE SPORTS, A5