

# Network News



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## HYDROFRACKING UPDATE



Allegheny Defense Project and Lighthawk

### The Finger Lakes Land Trust Comments on Expansion of Natural Gas Development in State Forests

By Andrew E. Zepp, Executive Director

Coming soon to New York's state forests and national forest, and the Cayuga Lake watershed? A view of the gas well pads, roads, pipelines and other infrastructure criss-crossing the Allegheny National Forest near Sackett PA. For more photos and information: <http://www.alleghenydefenseproject.org> .

*Editor's note: The residents of New York State have been on a roller coaster ride this year regarding the proposed permitting of shale gas wells using high-volume horizontal hydraulic fracturing (HVHFF). To date, that practice remains barred by an informal moratorium, backed by an Executive Order issued by Governor Paterson in mid-December. However, during this period of limbo between the Paterson and Cuomo administrations in Albany from now until January, the controls appear to have loosened: vertical fracking of the Marcellus Shale is being permitted; seismic testing is starting in new areas, and Wall Street is agog with the buying and selling of land and leases across the region. We must urge our leaders to stand firm against any premature actions leading to permitting, drilling, and water withdrawals from our watersheds.*

*An emerging water quality concern is that our state forests are under consideration for HVHFF leasing and drilling. As with our national forests, state forests are a multiple-use resource with a long history of leasing for drilling, mining and timbering; however, HVHFF could be a far more intensive and potentially destructive use of our state forests, several of which lie within the Cayuga Lake watershed.*

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# The Finger Lakes Land Trust Comments on Expansion of Natural Gas Development in State Forests *continued from cover*

At a recent community forum in Lansing, “Lessons from Pennsylvania” (co-sponsored by the Network), attendees heard three presenters speak about the degradation of outdoor recreation, fishing and nature appreciation activities in the fracking areas of Pennsylvania. Without any prior notice or comment opportunities, public hiking trails are being turned into trucking access roads to well pads, many of which lie astride or next to recreational lands. A (laughable) 100 foot buffer is required to separate hikers from frackers! Long-established wildlands have been severed into many small isolated patches, as shown in the aerial photo on page 1. (Look for links to these presentations on our Website soon.)

Numerous groups and individuals submitted comments on a proposal to allow HVVHF in our state forests. Following are the comments submitted on October 24, 2010 on the Strategic Plan for State Forest Management by Andy Zepp, Executive Director of the Finger Lakes Land Trust.

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I am writing on behalf of the Finger Lakes Land Trust to comment on the draft strategic plan proposed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for the state forest system. The Land Trust is quite concerned about the draft plan’s consideration of expanding natural gas development on state forest land.

The draft plan’s encouragement of expanded gas drilling is in conflict with the same document’s reference to fostering sustainable landscapes that must “have core blocks of minimally fragmented habitat.”

Within the 12-county Finger Lakes region, state forests represent some of the largest blocks of intact forest that remain. These forests provide habitat for a diversity of wildlife species, including a number of neotropical songbirds that rely on interior forest for nesting habitat. Increasingly, these same forests are utilized by residents and visitors alike for a variety of recreational activities such as hiking, hunting, bird watching, mountain biking, and cross country skiing.

Any expansion of gas drilling on state forest lands within the Finger Lakes region will degrade wildlife and recreational resources directly through habitat lost to the construction of well pads, access roads, and pipelines. Indirect impacts associated with drilling include increased susceptibility to invasion by nonnative species and greater disturbance of resident wildlife through the creation of corridors that can be subject to use by ATV riders and others.

By allowing the expansion of natural gas development on its forest lands, the state will also be subordinating the important role that these lands play in helping to maintain high quality surface water resources. In Tompkins County, for example, Hammond Hill and Yellow Barn State Forests encompass substantial portions of the headwaters for Six

Mile Creek - the source of Ithaca’s drinking water supply.

By allowing drilling in areas like this, water quality will be diminished, even if safeguards are used. Impacts associated with any development of natural gas resources on state forest lands are likely to be exacerbated by expected gas development on adjacent private lands. Most state forests are intermingled with private holdings. Based on comments within the State’s Supplemental Draft Generic Environmental Impacts Statement for drilling associated with the Marcellus shale formation, it seems likely that almost all private land within the region will ultimately be made available for gas development.

If this occurs, state forests may represent the only remaining intact forests of any size. Consequently their value for wildlife that depends upon interior forest habitat will only increase. Their value for recreational use will also increase as it will become increasingly difficult for residents and visitors to find landscapes that are not subject to some form of intrusive development.

Thanks to the state’s stewardship of its forests, tracts of highly eroded farmland during the 1930’s have matured into native forests that harbor black bear, fisher, goshawks, and scarlet tanagers. These lands now provide clean water to many streams that flow into the Finger Lakes as well as the Susquehanna River and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay. Recreational resources such as the Finger Lakes Trail enjoy increasing use as more and more people discover these lands.

The value of maintaining these lands in their current condition outweighs any value to be gained from utilizing them for energy development. These lands represent some of our finest remaining forest resources. Allowing their

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## Cayuga Lake Watershed Network

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The Cayuga Lake Watershed Network thanks Westhill Graphics of Ithaca, Pioneer Printing of Lodi, and Tompkins Weekly for their support and excellence.

# Seasonal Gift Request to support specific projects

We greatly appreciate the donations from members that we received this year, largely in response to our appeal in August prompted by the horrible damage done to the Gulf of Mexico by the BP oil spill. This focused all our minds on what can happen when oil and gas developments go seriously wrong.

For those of you who were unable to give money at that time, or for a second gift if you are able, we are asking you to consider a tax-deductible gift to the Network to support some specific projects that we are engaged in. This gift can be assigned to one or more of these projects, according to your wishes.

The projects are:

- **The threats of hydrofracking** – working with town groups to try to control and limit impacts on water resources should hydrofracking be allowed to proceed;
- **Poorly performing septic systems** – working with a Town Board and others to improve identification of failing systems on creeks and lakeside, and to identify help to finance the improvements;
- **Excessive weed growth in Cayuga Lake** – to recommend a number of control measures for home owners, possibly with a demonstration plot;
- **The health of the watershed** – to report periodically on watershed health so that you are kept informed of the latest threats, and we all know where best to focus our attention;
- **Updating our Website** – to make it more responsive to our messages and information, and your concerns;

- **Future watershed leaders** – to help to train these future leaders through our Intern program.

If you are able to support any, or all, of these activities please consider a gift. You can specify which of the projects you would like the money to fund and it will be used only for that project, or you can give without specifying! If you want to support more than one, then we will split the donation as you indicate. Gifts can be sent in by check or using Paypal on our web site (if you use Paypal, you can send a note or email separately indicating your request for how the money is used). Below is a short form you can cut out and use. An envelope is included with this newsletter issue. You will be sent a thank-you note stating that your gift is tax-deductible.

If you would like more information about these or other projects, please contact our Steward at the email address or telephone number shown on the inside front cover of this Newsletter. Please give! Thank you.

*John Mawdsley, Chair  
Board of Directors,  
Cayuga Lake Watershed Network*

## Yes! Enclosed is my year-end tax-deductible donation to support the Network's projects.

PLEASE USE MY DONATION FOR:

- The threats of hydrofracking.....\$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Poorly performing septic systems .....\$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Excessive weed growth in Cayuga Lake ...\$ \_\_\_\_\_
- The health of the watershed .....\$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Updating our Website .....\$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Future watershed leaders .....\$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Any of the above.....\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

May we add you to our listserv?  Yes  No

Suggested amounts: \$10 - \$25 - \$35 - \$50 - \$75 - \$100 – or more! *Thank you.* Your gifts strengthen us.

Please use this form or a separate sheet of paper to indicate your donation preferences, and send your check in the enclosed pre-addressed envelope. You can also donate online via PayPal, at our web site: [www.cayugalake.org](http://www.cayugalake.org). You will receive a thank-you stating that your donation is fully tax-deductible.

# Lurking Sources of Pollution to Cayuga Lake: The Perspective of a Life-Long Resident

By Douglas Brewer

*Doug is a graduating senior at Wells College, and a Seneca Falls native. He has been our excellent student intern during the past semester. There are many students like Doug in our watershed seeking internship and other pre-professional training and experience in environmental science and water resources research and protection. The Network plans to develop and expand its ability to assist these young people. Thanks go to Doug, an Emerging Watershed Leader!*

Cayuga Lake's is a major watershed (865 square miles) in the Finger Lakes region draining a multitude of subwatersheds, and serves as both an environmental and economic resource. Streams, creeks, tributaries, various waterfalls and the Seneca-Cayuga Canal system managed by a lock system all drain into Cayuga Lake. Not only does the lake absorb carbon, relieve flooding, and provide a home to marine life, the lake helps increase the economy through fishing and tourism, and increases land value.

The region is known for its agriculture and farm production, but, unfortunately what has provided the livelihood for the rural area has added to the pollution of Cayuga Lake and our drinking water. Over time, the lake has been subject to many sources of pollution, one of which is known as *sediment loading*. There are many forms of water pollution, but sediment is considered the most serious threat to the Cayuga Lake Watershed.

There are many sources surrounding Cayuga Lake that contribute to sediment loading. However, the primary source of sedimentation can be attributed to agricultural and farming practices. Although exposing the soil and exhausting it through daily farming practices may be done by the farmer unconsciously, it makes the soil more vulnerable to be transported by wind and/or rain.

Over-plowing and overgrazing turn up soil that is easily carried away by the large amounts of water used on a field. Spreading excess manure on a frozen soil washes into nearby waterways because it doesn't absorb the slick manure. Letting livestock walk in streams to drink water instead of just drinking on the surface, destroys the stream bank because it makes it unstable and loosens the dirt along the embankment, adding sediment to the water. Ultimately, these farming practices loosen sediments that eventually end up in Cayuga Lake. Although sediment loading might occur naturally, agricultural and farming practices may be

considered main sources that accelerate the process.

One of the recreational activities that Cayuga Lake has to offer is waterfowl hunting. It is home to hundreds of thousands of waterfowl year round, particularly early in the winter before they migrate south. Canada geese are predominant in the cold season and spend numerous hours floating near the shoreline scavenging for food. Lakefront property owners have stated that there has been a significant increase in weeds and have accused geese of causing the rapid weed growth. The accumulation of waste from the hundreds of thousands of geese that visit Cayuga Lake

fertilizes aquatic weeds, causing them to grow rapidly.

Another pertinent issue that deters the health of Cayuga Lake is the threat of invasive species. Boaters have inadvertently transported aquatic invasive species by failing to wash off their boats after being on different lakes. One main invasive culprit of Cayuga Lake is the zebra mussel. Zebra mussels outcompete certain marine species, attach to anything they

can, and mat the floor of lakes covering virtually everything. A noticeable problem concerning the northern end of Cayuga Lake is accelerated weed growth. Since zebra mussels increase water clarity by thinning out suspended particles in the water, the Sun's rays are able to penetrate at greater depths, promoting weed growth. This form of pollution creates a ripple effect and has an impact on species and ecosystems outside the proximity of Cayuga Lake.

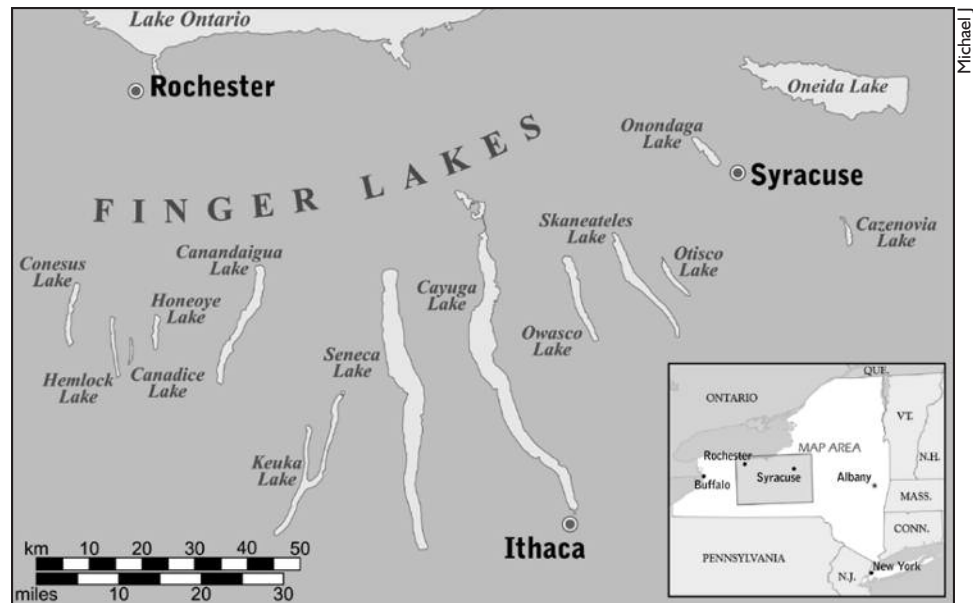
These are among the main contributors to the water quality challenges facing our beautiful Cayuga Lake – and they are all solvable. If we can educate residents and visitors, and get them to understand that they can be part of the solution by changing their behavior and making different choices, we and our descendants could enjoy a long-term sustainable situation across the Cayuga Lake watershed. 🐦



*Cayuga Lake has been a source of fascination and fun for a long time. This old photo shows a diver and smiling crew offshore of the Village of Cayuga near the north end of the lake. Wonder what they have in mind, in such shallow water? Scanned and shared by Bill Hecht.*

# The Finger Lakes Regional Watershed Alliance is Formed

*This past summer, representatives of the lake and watershed associations of the nine publicly-owned and inhabited Finger Lakes met at the Finger Lakes Institute in Geneva to begin the process of forming a new organization that will focus on the unique needs of the Finger Lakes area of our state.*



From west to east, Conesus, Honeoye, Canandaigua, Keuka, Seneca, Cayuga, Owasco, Skaneateles and Otisco are the official nine Finger Lakes. Hemlock and Canadice are wholly owned and protected by the City of Rochester as their water supply.

Individuals from the following lake and watershed groups participated: Canandaigua Lake Watershed Association, Cayuga Lake Watershed Network, Conesus Lake Association, Honeoye Valley Association, Keuka Lake Association, Otisco Lake Preservation Association, Owasco Watershed Lake Association, Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association, and Tri-County Skaneateles Lake Pure Water Association. These groups together represent over 7,000 members.

At the end of that meeting, all nine associations agreed to form the Finger Lakes Regional Watershed Alliance, to span the Finger Lakes and represent the allied interests of those living in this geographic area. Hilary Lambert and John Mawdsley will serve as initial representatives from the Network to the FLRWA.

The stated purpose of the Finger Lakes Watershed Alliance is “to bring together the members, expertise and desires of the Finger Lakes watershed associations to preserve and protect the watersheds of the Finger Lakes region

## **The group identified three goals:**

- 1 Join forces to advocate for mutually beneficial regional changes, backed by sound research.
- 2 Seek funds, in concert with other organizations, to support initiatives that transcend individual watershed boundaries.
- 3 Share best practices, and where none exist, work together to establish pilot projects with the intent of replicating those that are successful throughout the region.

*with a collective regional voice.”*

At its initial meeting, the Alliance identified six watershed-related issues (from 29 listed by members) for initial exploration by FLRWA: gas drilling in Marcellus Shale and other shale formations; phosphates, weeds & algae; invasive species; agricultural best management practices (“BMPs”); landfills; and tax equity throughout the watersheds.

At upcoming Alliance meetings, these priority topics will be discussed to determine whether FLRWA can impact the discussion of each across the lakes, and what actions can be taken across the Finger Lakes to affect

change. A Website is being developed, and other ways are being discussed to communicate about the issues facing the Finger Lakes, and how to organize this alliance to maximize its effectiveness across the region.

How will FLRWA benefit the Finger Lakes region of New York State? Alliance members believe that a common cross-Finger Lakes positioning regarding the issues that face these lakes might be more successful than individual lake and watershed associations acting independently. The impact of lake and watershed associations acting together

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# “What Price Development?”

## Our Fall Conference was Informative – and Sobering!

The Cayuga Lake Watershed Network’s October 23 free public conference, “What Price Development? Water-Focused Issues of Concern” welcomed about 45 people to Ithaca’s Unitarian Church Annex to hear three presentations, with refreshments and a panel discussion following.

Bill Kappel of the US Geological Survey spoke about looming water quality issues pertaining to proposed slickwater high-volume hydrofracking (AKA “Marcellus shale gas drilling”). Following a fast, excellent overview of the fracking process, Kappel outlined how municipalities need to prepare for a vastly increased, costly load on already hard-pressed public services and overstressed environmental protection standards. His presentation will be available soon at our web site under a new clickable page, “Hydrofracking Information and Updates”.

Susan Riha, who wears several hats including Professor, Cornell Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences and Director, NYS Water Resources Institute (WRI), spoke about climate change and potential stormwater impacts to the Finger Lakes region. She deftly sketched what is knowable via present-day climate models, suggesting that while she can state with some confidence that our climate locally will be shifting toward

more extreme precipitation events and a somewhat different climate regime, we are still in a period of transition. Long-term changes emerging over the next couple of decades will affect us all, and area municipalities must be flexible, adaptive, and forward-looking.

Liz Moran, founder of EcoLogic LLC, offered a detailed look at the decision-making and selection process for finding a

paved with retail stores, planned for homes, and other uses) from flooding and to ensure continued safe navigational uses of the Inlet for boaters. The site preliminarily selected for an ongoing dredge spoil de-watering site would be in the undeveloped area behind the big box stores off Route 13. The selection process will provide more public input opportunities via public hearings and comment submission.



Presenters Bill Kappel, Susan Riha, and Liz Moran listen to Roxy Johnston, moderator of “What Price Development?”

de-watering site location for dredge spoil from Cayuga Inlet on the southwest side of Ithaca. As directed by EcoLogic, the selection process offers many opportunities for public input and opinion. The dredging project has been in the making for over a decade, and is necessary to protect the adjoining low-lying riparian areas (much of which is now developed and

Thanks to Roxy Johnston, John Mawdsley, Judith Pipher, Rebecca Ruggles and the CLWN Program Committee for their hard work putting together this event. 🐦

– Hilary Lambert, Steward

# The Finger Lakes Regional Watershed Alliance is Formed

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is more likely to produce positive results when dealing with agencies and higher levels of government. FLRWA represents thousands of members (and potential voters) in the western portion of New York State. As this group establishes its regional identity, and provides a single voice to lawmakers, potential funding agencies and others, the extent of that impact may begin to be felt.

Residents of the Finger Lakes region are fortunate to live in this part of New York. This area is a unique and irreplaceable natural resource. The recent transfer of ownership of Hemlock and Canadice Lakes to New York State will ensure their forever-wild status and prevent development around these two Finger Lakes. In the future, it will be important for the nine developed Finger Lakes to address the

conservation, sustainability and water quality challenges that the region faces. FLRWA has the potential to provide the strong regional leadership beyond that of individual lake or watershed associations, that is essential to preserving and protecting the entire Finger Lakes region for future generations. 🦅

*“to bring together the members, expertise and desires of the Finger Lakes watershed associations to preserve and protect the watersheds of the Finger Lakes region with a collective regional voice.”*

— stated purpose of the Finger Lakes Watershed Alliance

## Please Join or Donate to the Network Joining or donating is easy to do!



**MAIL:** Fill out the information below, select a donation level, and mail the form with your check to Cayuga Lake Watershed Network, P.O. Box 348, Aurora, NY 13026

**PAYPAL:** Join via your PayPal account or credit card online at [www.cayugalake.org](http://www.cayugalake.org)

- I am joining the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network with the enclosed contribution.
- I am renewing my membership with the enclosed contribution.
- Send a gift membership to the person listed below, and send me a gift card to give them.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ May we add you to our listserv?  Yes  No

Please Select the Support Level You Prefer:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Watershed Benefactor  | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Lake Sponsor       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Headwater Donor       | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Farm/Small Business |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Organization or Agency | <input type="checkbox"/> \$35 Family              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Individual             | <input type="checkbox"/> \$10 Student/Senior      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                 |   |

## Thank you for your support!!!

Your Contributions to the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network are tax deductible.

# Things to Do in the Watershed

**“Cayuga Lake Heritage”:** Watch Tony Ingraham’s weekly public access TV show on cable channel 13 in Ithaca, NY. You can see the entire show every Tuesday at 8:00 pm and every Sunday at 10:00 am on Time Warner Cable in the Ithaca area. You can also watch the shows online whenever you want, at: <http://cayugalakeheritage.wordpress.com>. Some of the episodes are: “Cayuga and its Canals,” “Managing Water Levels in Cayuga Lake,” and “Rain Refills Ithaca’s Waterfalls.” Learn about Tony’s Watkins Glen and Ithaca Books at <http://owlgorge.com> and look for these titles at local bookstores: *Ithaca: The City, Gorges, and Colleges*, and *A Walk Through Watkins Glen: Water’s Sculpture in Stone*.

**Seneca Falls Heritage Area Visitor Center and Heritage Area.** Begin your visit at the Visitor Center, 89 Fall Street, Seneca Falls. Hours: Monday through Saturday 10:00 am to 4 pm, Sunday noon to 4:00 pm, closed on major holidays. The nearby Heritage Area features a commercial main street, a well-appointed harbor on the Cayuga-Seneca Canal, and architecturally interesting historic districts and individual sites. Find out more at: <http://www.senecafalls.com/history-heritage/php> or call (315) 568-1510.

## The Finger Lakes Land Trust Comments on Expansion of Natural Gas Development in State Forests *continued from page 2*

short term exploitation for natural gas extraction will compromise their long term ecological integrity. The residents of the State of New York will derive far greater benefit from these lands if they continue to be managed as working forests with associated recreational, wildlife, and watershed protection benefits.

The Finger Lakes Land Trust was established in 1989 to work cooperatively with landowners and local communities to protect those lands that define the character of the region. To date, the organization has secured more than 11,000 acres through direct acquisition as well as the use of conservation easements. The Land Trust has acquired several parcels on behalf of NYSDEC as additions to state forests and wildlife management areas. The organization also owns land and holds conservation easements that adjoin state forest holdings. The Land Trust is supported by more than 1,900 residents from across the region. Thanks very much for the opportunity to comment on the draft strategic plan. 🦋

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**The Mission...** *The Cayuga Lake Watershed Network identifies key threats to Cayuga Lake and its watershed, and it advocates for solutions that support a healthy environment and vibrant communities.*

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