



**CATSKILL MOUNTAINKEEPER**  
The Advocate for the Catskills

## Colorado Flooding - Environmental Catastrophe

### If fracking is permitted in NY, it could happen here

The scope of the environmental disaster in Colorado from the epic flooding is still unfolding. The latest from Colorado's regulatory agency is that they are working feverishly to access the damage and potential leaks to its 50,000 oil wells. So far they have calculated that 34,500 gallons of crude have spilled and that dozens of condensation tanks that hold the chemically laden wastes from fracking have overturned and have potentially leaked into the floodwaters. At least one pipeline has been confirmed broken and leaking.

This has created a short and long term health crisis of yet undetermined proportions.

Colorado's lax regulations don't require that drillers release the names of chemicals used in fracking fluid but it is known that they are linked to diseases and medical conditions that include cancers, infertility, autism, diabetes and thyroid disorders and that chronic illnesses from exposure to these chemicals can take many years to manifest.

Catskill Mountainkeeper has been warning for years that future floods in New York could lead to catastrophe if fracking is approved because of the probability of toxins from fracking waste getting into our water supply.

Wes Gillingham, Catskill Mountainkeeper Program Director, was [quoted by CBS News last week](#) as saying, "This is a real concern. We were talking about it two years ago. People need to understand what kind of contamination has happened on the local level in Colorado and what health impact it has. To see this come to life on such a large scale in Colorado is both terrifying and humbling."



*WELD COUNTY, CO. - SEPTEMBER 16: A drilling derrick near Greeley stands in land flooded by the South Platte River. (Photo By Tim Rasmussen/The Denver Post via Getty Images)*

A tragedy of the magnitude of the Colorado flooding eviscerates the theory that if New York

allowed fracking we could protect ourselves from this kind of devastation by being smarter or having better regulations. While the proposed regulations for New York – the Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement (SGEIS) – appear to be better than the regulations that govern in Colorado, there is no way they could address a calamity like the Colorado flooding.

The most recent version of the SGEIS even allows open waste pits, contrary to what the public was originally led to believe, although they call them centralized facilities. The Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) only nod to public concern about open waste pits is a note in the document that says that they believe that the gas industry will not use them.



*Widespread flooding covered the Catskills after hurricane Irene in 2011. Schoharie County, above.*

The SGEIS seeks to protect from flooding in 100 year flood plains, but as we've seen from the recent storm in Colorado, climate change is making storms that were previously categorized as 500 or even 1,000-year storms the "new normal".

Even if the proposed regulations were stringent, the New York Department of Environmental Conservation has major manpower shortages, and in multiple cases over the last year the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has shown an unwillingness to deal with fracking pollution.

We are seeing that the gas industry is not immune from the destruction that its

activities have helped to create. We are in a vicious cycle – we are burning fossil fuels and releasing carbon into the air, which is accelerating climate change and increasing the intensity of storms like the one that caused the flooding in Colorado. But there is a better way - we don't have to put our planet at risk to get our energy. We can change our paradigm to renewable energy choices such as solar, wind and geothermal that are rapidly becoming cost competitive and practical.

Please join us in sending messages to [President Obama](#) ([click here for sample message](#)) and [Governor Cuomo](#) that fracking is the wrong choice for New York and our country and implore them to take whatever political risks are necessary to develop clean energy solutions.

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