

# FINGER LAKES TIMES

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## Screening of anti-fracking film "Gasland" Dec. 8

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GENEVA --- The 2010 Sundance Film Festival award-winning documentary "Gasland" by Josh Fox explores the largest domestic natural gas drilling boom in history.

It will be shown Dec. 8 at the Smith Opera House.

"If you see only one film on the subject of hydrofracking, this should be the one," said Philip Cianciotto, president of the Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association, one of the groups sponsoring the movie.

Hydrofracking — properly known as hydraulic fracturing — is a controversial drilling method developed by Halliburton. It involves drilling a standard vertical bore into a deep shale area, followed by drilling up to eight horizontal shafts of several thousand feet each.

The horizontal drilling requires millions of gallons of chemically-treated water mixed with sand and injected under pressures of up to 15,000 pounds per square inch.

This facilitates the drilling process and fractures the shale to release the trapped gas, but opponents say the chemically treated water contains known carcinogens and neurotoxins.

This fluid-sand mix is pumped to the surface and the gas extracted. The remaining hydrofracking "mud" mix needs to be handled in some way to avoid environmental damage.

The Marcellus Shale region is said to be the nation's richest natural gas reserve, and energy companies are eager to use hydrofracking to obtain the gas. The process is allowed in West Virginia and Pennsylvania, but New York has held off issuing permits until a full environmental review is completed.

The Marcellus Shale includes part of the southern Finger Lakes.

Advocates says the process is safe. They cite major economic benefits to the natural gas companies and landowners, who stand to receive substantial lease payments for drilling rights.

Filmmaker Josh Fox got involved when a gas company approached him about leasing family land along the Delaware River.

Fox decided to investigate the gas company, hydrofracking and its impact on the environment. His film is critical of the gas industry over alleged secrets, lies and contamination.

The film has drawn accusations of "bashing" from the gas industry. The New York Independent Oil and Gas Institute is among those criticizing the film.

"Gasland is a fairy tale," said James Smith, spokesman for IOGA.

"The filmmaker take irresponsible liberties with history and the public record. He misrepresents the laws governing drilling and the processes involved in natural gas exploration, and he reiterates myths that have long been discredited," Smith said.

"A glaring example is where he claims fracking fluid has a mix of over 596 chemicals. A typical hydraulic fracturing job will use 10 to 12 ingredients at the most, with the water and sand," Smith said.

Fox has issued a detailed rebuttal to the accusations.

After the movie is shown, there will be a panel discussion featuring:

n John Halfman, professor of geoscience and chairman of the Environmental Studies program at Hobart and William Smith Colleges and research scientist at the Finger Lakes Institute.

Halfman and his students have studied and accumulated much data about Seneca Lake and other Finger Lakes over the past 20 years.

n Jack Ossont, president of The Committee to Preserve the Finger Lakes, which has taken a strong stance against hydrofracking.

He is involved in a wide variety of progressive, environmental and social justice issues. He is a former Yates County Legislature member.

n Edwin Przybylowicz, retired senior vice president and director of research for Kodak, member of the Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association board of directors and chairman of the association's Marcellus Shale Committee.

There will be questions from the audience, moderated by Cianciotto.

Doors will open at 6 p.m. for informal discussions with local environmental groups sponsoring the movie.

"These groups are working diligently to prevent a rush to hydrofracking and to ensure that the public is made aware of all of its ramifications," Cianciotto said.

"It is realized that New York State could ultimately benefit economically from hydrofracking, but it might also leave the state with a massive environmental cleanup bill," he said.