

## **THE DANGERS OF INDUSTRIAL GAS DRILLING**

- Gas and oil companies want to extract gas from the Marcellus Shale, a vast mineral reserve that lies about one mile underground and spans five states. The shale area includes the Catskills and the West-of-Hudson portion of the New York City Watershed.
- To access gas in the reserve, the companies propose to use hydraulic fracturing — also known as **fracking** — a drilling technique that can contaminate groundwater, surface water and drinking water supplies by releasing carcinogens and toxic chemicals into the environment. Riverkeeper has steadfastly campaigned for the banning of hydraulic fracturing within the NYC watershed and all sensitive water supply areas.
- As part of that mission, Riverkeeper has issued 10 volumes of its **Industrial Gas Drilling Reporter**, which compiles information about spills and contamination across the United States due to gas drilling.



*Drinking water of Dimock PA resident.  
Photo courtesy WVSORO*

### **OUR FIGHT AGAINST FRACKING**

- Riverkeeper's report, **Fractured Communities**, highlights case studies in which state and federal regulators identified gas drilling operations — including those that use hydraulic fracturing — as the known or suspected cause of environmental contamination. A few examples:
  - More than 20 cases of drinking water contamination in Pennsylvania;
  - More than 30 cases of groundwater and drinking water contamination in Colorado and Wyoming;
  - Five explosions that contaminated groundwater and/or surface water between 2006 and 2010.
- Riverkeeper launched its **Don't Frack With NY!** campaign, which urges New York residents to tell state officials that they are opposed to fracking in the NYC watershed.



*Drinking water of Dimock PA resident.  
Photo courtesy Jay Simpson*

### **PUTTING PRESSURE ON FEDERAL AND STATE OFFICIALS**

- Riverkeeper has urged the EPA to continue working with states to ensure that regulation and enforcement of hydraulic fracturing operations are top priorities and called on the agency to pursue all possible steps to stem the tide of oil and gas pollution in the U.S.
- The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) released its draft environmental impact statement (EIS) regarding the potential environmental effects of hydraulic fracturing in September 2009. After studying the EIS, Riverkeeper concluded that DEC rushed to complete the review process and is **biased in favor of issuing drilling permits** as soon as possible.
- Both the New York State Senate and Assembly passed legislation that would impose a moratorium on the issuance of gas drilling permits until May 15, 2011. This moratorium covered both horizontal and vertical wells for fracking. In December, Governor Paterson vetoed this legislation, and simultaneously issued an Executive Order, which places a timeout on horizontal wells for fracking for natural gas through July 1, 2011. The Executive Order creates a loophole that oil and gas corporations can exploit according to environmental, good government, community and public health organizations. Like horizontal wells, vertical wells have been linked to drinking water contamination and other health and environmental dangers across the country. Additionally, gas companies have already threatened to drill vertically into the Marcellus and Utica Shale formations during the moratorium and then convert those wells into horizontal wells as soon as the moratorium sunsets.