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Permit Applications Filed For Waterless Shale Gas Well in New York

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Despite New York enacting a ban on high-volume hydraulic fracturing (HVHF) last month, Tioga Energy Partners LLC has submitted permit applications to drill one shale gas well in Tioga County using gelled liquid petroleum gas (LPG) instead of water, a technology the company says puts the well outside the scope of the ban.

Adam Schultz, an attorney with the Albany, NY-based law firm Couch White LLP and who is representing Tioga, said the company has submitted two permit applications to the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for a single well that would target the Marcellus and Utica shales. The well would be drilled from a 53-acre spacing unit shared by five farming families, also known as the Snyder Farm Group.

"It's a small unit because the idea is to drill and complete a single well," Schultz told *NGI's Shale Daily* on Friday. "We're just doing one well because we want to prove that we can develop and complete the well. We want to prove the technology and that it can be done in New York."

Schultz said the well would initially target the Utica Shale and be drilled to a depth of 9,500 feet. Tioga would then back out and drill a horizontal lateral into the Marcellus Shale at 4,400 feet. DEC regulations require two separate permits for the separate targets, he said.

More than 800 sites in North America have used LPG for fracking purposes. Once the propane gel warms, it reverts to a gaseous state and is directed back to the surface, where it is captured. The gas can then either be sent back down the well or sold on the marketplace.

"The technology and the project fall outside of the recently enacted state ban on HVHF because we're not using any water," Schultz said.

A spokesman for the DEC did not respond to several requests for comment. Schultz said the DEC was not initially under any deadline to process Tioga's applications. "They will do their initial review, hopefully within 30 days, and then they'll have to make a couple of determinations that will end up triggering clocks at that point. But at first pass, there's no deadline."

He added that he "wouldn't be surprised, given the environment in New York," if there were lawsuits filed over Tioga's plans. "We're going into it with our eyes open.

"The focus right now is on this one well and proving it out. If it's successful -- which, obviously, we hope that it is -- and if that leads to a brighter future for a lot of people in an economically depressed part of the state, then that would be great."

Waterless fracking started to enter the shale drilling lexicon in 2011, with Calgary-based GasFrac Energy Services Inc. awaiting a U.S. patent for its LPG technology (see *Shale Daily*, [Nov. 14, 2011](#)).

Tioga County quickly became a battleground over the technology. In 2012, the Southern Tier Energy Partners LLC landowners group, which controlled nearly 135,000 net acres in the county, signed a memorandum of understanding with GasFrac and eCorp International LLC to operate some gas wells there. But eCorp pulled out two months later (see *Shale Daily*, [May 4, 2012](#); [March 30, 2012](#)). A coalition of environmental groups urged the New York Department of Environmental Conservation Commission to review any LPG applications (see *Shale Daily*, [April 16, 2012](#)).

Last year, EV Energy Partners LP used gelled propane to stimulate its Nettle 3H well in Tuscarawas County, OH (see *Shale Daily*, [Dec. 11, 2014](#)).

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