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Attorney Says Waterless Fracking Meets NY Rules

Posted on **August 20, 2015** by **Natural Gas Now Guest Blogger**



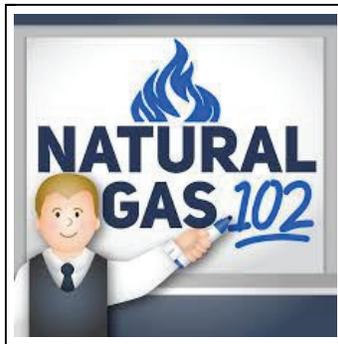
Zach Olson
Attorney, Lobbyist and Executive Editor, [Natural Gas 102](#)

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Zach Olson of NaturalGas102.com did an interview with Attorney Adam Schultz who is an advocate for waterless fracking. (Interview below, starts at 17:16)

Adam is an attorney practicing in Albany, New York with the firm [Couch White](#). His legal practice focuses on helping companies move projects through local, state, and federal permitting processes to a successful completion. He has been in the news lately because he is helping a client in New York get a [permit for fracking](#), using gelled propane instead of water.

In 1992, New York State released a [Generic Environmental Impact Statement \(GEIS\)](#) on oil and gas operations. This study provided the basis for evaluating oil and gas wells proposed in New York in the subsequent years. In 2008, as the shale boom picked up, New York decided to do a [more extensive health study](#) on high-volume hydraulic fracturing. That led to a [supplemental GEIS](#), which became a highly charged political document, and was finally released in June 2015.



After the health study's release in December 2014, State Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker [found](#) "significant questions and risks to public health which as of yet are unanswered" and Gov. Andrew Cuomo banned "high-volume hydraulic fracturing." The Governor's ban was specific to "the stimulation of a well using 300,000 or more gallons of water as the base fluid for hydraulic fracturing for all stages in a well completion, regardless of whether the well is vertical or directional, including horizontal." From Adam's perspective, the State studied and banned a very specific activity over concerns relating to water.

Adam has applied to have his client drill a well to be completed with propane fracturing. He noted this method has been used on over 800 well sites in North America, including more than 2,600 fractured well zones. The system is an entirely closed loop. At the surface, propane is mixed with a gelling agent and sand in what is essentially a big blender. Then the gel is sent down the well, the pressure fractures the shale rock around the well, and the sand props open the cracks in the rock. After the fracturing, much of the propane returns up the pipe along with natural gas produced by the well.





Propane fracturing site

At a high level, fracking with propane and water are similar, but propane has some advantages. The obvious advantage is that propane fracking uses zero water, which eliminates most environmental complaints. Adam explained that propane is also a more efficient carrier of sand, because the sand remains suspended in propane but sinks in water. This means propane causes more efficient fracturing and leads to more productive wells. Water used in fracking also brings up low levels of naturally occurring radioactive materials (NORM), and propane does not. Propane fracturing has historically been done in locations where water sourcing is a problem, and it has been considered more expensive than fracturing with water. Adam said that the low price of propane and improved efficiency of the process has led some studies to show propane fracturing costs on par with water. Adam also said the geology in the Marcellus is well-suited for this process.

Adam addressed some of the questions that have been raised about his client's application. He said the State of New York will have to decide if the 1992 General Environmental Impact Statement is sufficient, or if additional study will need to be done. Adam says he has seen comments that he is "skirting" the New York ban, but he says the proposal is completely consistent with New York policy. He also said his client is well aware of the economic risks of the project. But the proposal is just to drill one well at this point, it is completely privately funded, and they would not have started the project if they did not believe they could be successful.



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