

could be adequately mitigated at all. The Department concludes that there would be unavoidable cumulative impacts to community character and wildlife habitat.

Based on unavoidable adverse environmental impacts and uncertainty regarding the science surrounding high-volume hydraulic fracturing and its potential impacts to public health and the environment, the Department finds that the best course of action is to select the No Action alternative. Selection of the No Action alternative means that the Department will not establish a high-volume hydraulic fracturing permitting program; that no individual or site-specific permit applications for wells using high-volume hydraulic fracturing will be processed; and that high-volume hydraulic fracturing will be prohibited in New York State.

The Department rejects the other available alternatives (the “phased-permitting approach,” the “environmentally-friendly chemical approach,” and the “Special Places” alternative) because they all fail to limit unavoidable adverse environmental impacts and fail to address the risks and uncertainties of high-volume hydraulic fracturing.

The phased permitting alternative could limit and/or restrict resource development in designated areas to reduce certain unavoidable adverse environmental impacts identified in the SGEIS, such as identified impacts on community character, and visual, noise and transportation impacts that are anticipated to occur as a result of the development. However, the phased permitting alternative would not address the risks and uncertainties arising from accidents, spills and unforeseen events as effectively as the No Action alternative would succeed in addressing those concerns. Additionally, a phased permitting approach would further reduce the potential economic benefits from high-volume hydraulic fracturing development and could reduce the economic viability of these operations in New York.

The “environmentally-friendly chemical alternative” and “Special Places” alternatives address potential environmental impacts for only certain resources, namely water resources and community character, and do not comprehensively address all of the potential adverse environmental impacts from the activity.