



The U.S. Department of Agriculture sparked the ire of hydrofracking opponents Tuesday, when it reversed its plans to require rural housing loans on properties with gas drilling leases to comply with the extensive environmental review required under the National Environmental Policy Act.

Josh Fox, director of the hydrofracking documentary "Gasland," was quick to take issue with the USDA's change of heart.

"This is a very important development and one that we need to speak up about," said Fox in a statement Tuesday night. "A full NEPA review, like the type the agency was talking about affirming, would have been more transparent, more rigorous and comprehensive.

USDA staff experts in the New York office as well as in Washington made clear in emails that the law and the science require that mortgages with drilling leases shouldn't be exempt from NEPA. This 180-degree turn by Secretary Vilsack contradicts both science and law."

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