

PROTECTING OUR WATERS

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Rural, suburban and urban Pennsylvanians come together here today, standing up as human communities whose health is threatened by horizontal hydrofracking. We are brought together by our absolute need to protect air, water, earth and climate from the devastations already wrought by a greedy, powerful industry with far too many friends in high places.

Philadelphia is up in arms, as we cannot afford the health problems which will be created by the dumping of radioactive toxic waste into our drinking water; we cannot afford the cleanup bill created by an industry so busy getting its permits expedited and getting its serious violations whitewashed by politicians who accept money from gas drillers and do their bidding. I deliver here today a letter from the entire Philadelphia Legislative Delegation, as well as four City Council Resolutions all calling for a moratorium on gas drilling AT LEAST until a Cumulative Impact Study has been assessed for the entire Delaware River Basin. Protecting Our Waters, a grassroots Philadelphia-based group with members in all four Basin states, is delivering over 1500 passionate and informed comments from residents ranging from high school students to seniors; including the fifty-three statewide leaders of the Pennsylvania Alliance of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals and thirty members of the Penn Environmental Group from the University of Pennsylvania. This issue touches ordinary people everywhere.

There are far too many red flags already showing that horizontal hydrofracking hurts human health. Asthma among children has increased to a rate of 25% in heavy drilling areas; rural Wyoming has smog as heavy as Los Angeles due to hydrofracking; and climate impacts -- the biggest health and safety threat to us all -- are greater from shale gas drilling than from coal. Homes have blown up due to methane migration in Bradford Township, and dozens of families in Bradford County, Dimock, Hickory and elsewhere in PA cannot drink their well water which has been poisoned by gas drilling. Rural Pennsylvanians report human health impacts from nausea to skin lesions and respiratory distress; cancers and deaths due to fracking chemical exposure have been reported out West; in PA and elsewhere, farmers report sick and dead animals, stillborn calves, and disappearing wildlife due to gas drilling. How many red flags do we need to show this process poisons life?"

Protecting Our Waters stands for a complete moratorium on gas drilling projects in the Delaware River Basin and statewide. Even the Philadelphia Inquirer called for a "ban for now" in the Basin.

Among many demands Protecting Our Waters specifically makes of DRBC:

- Use of toxic chemicals in fracking must be not just fully disclosed, but prohibited; non-toxic marine-grade fluids must be mandated here and statewide.
- DRBC rules allow plastic-lined open impoundments for fracking waste, such open pits must be prohibited as they are a hazard to water, air, and wildlife.
- Open pits allow lethal levels of radioactive fluids to permanently enter the environment and food chain, as rainwater causes pits to overflow and wildlife drinks the toxic water and dies, becoming food for other creatures; these pits must be outlawed as a health hazard.
- DRBC rules allow discharge of toxic gas drilling waste to the surface waters of the Basin. No surface discharge should be allowed especially given new information about the high radioactive content of gas drilling waste, combined with lax rules and lax enforcement statewide.
- Without a cumulative impact study to guide gas drilling regulations, the DRBC cannot maintain the high water quality which protects human health; these rules, therefore, are inadequate to protect human health and must be withdrawn while the moratorium is extended.
- Both the EPA study and the cumulative impact study specific to the geology of the Delaware River Basin (CIS) must assess not only acute risks but long-term risks to future generations due to:
 - open fissures in our unique hydrogeology (which may convey contaminants to the surface, causing many Love Canal-type disasters);
 - risks from earthquakes in our seismically active region;
 - cumulative risks from the release of Radium 226 and other alpha-particle-emitting radionuclides into our environment which may be ingested by humans through water and through the food chain, causing bone cancer and other cancers.