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Delaware River Basin Commission to Initiate Shale Gas Debate

Environmental advocates reject a resolution that bans fracking but allows frack waste disposal and water withdrawals in the Delaware River Watershed

The Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) issued a press release today that they are considering a resolution at their September 13 public meeting that would ban gas drilling and fracking but could allow the storage, treatment, and discharge of frack wastewater and the withdrawal of water from the watershed for fracking elsewhere.

http://www.nj.gov/drbc/home/newsroom/news/approved/20170911_newsrel_natgas.htm

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The news came on the heels of an Associated Press announcement last week that the DRBC was commencing a process to ban fracking and drilling. While the DRBC's proposed resolution offers a fracking ban provision, it takes a huge step backwards by removing the protections that the current moratorium includes – a prohibition of wastewater discharges and water withdrawals related to gas development.

The Coalition of organizations that have been demanding a complete ban define fracking as a process that includes all aspects of gas development and consider any attempt to segregate the phases of gas development to be disingenuous and technically erroneous. Fracking and the harms it brings include every phase from the industrial preparation of the land, to drilling and fracking, the withdrawal and degradation of water and its discharge and disposal – one stage cannot be severed from another. To allow waste dumping and water withdrawals would open the door for the degradation and depletion of the water resources of the Basin. The Coalition is opposed to the proposed resolution and is calling for a new resolution that comprehensively and permanently bans all aspects of gas development throughout the entire Delaware River Watershed.

The Coalition of groups working together for a ban are encouraging people to attend the DRBC regular business meeting on Wednesday, Sept. 13, where more details are

expected to be available for the public. Details about the coalition's plans are here: https://www.facebook.com/events/119035742090943/?active_tab=about

"With this resolution, the DRBC is poised to roll back the high level of protection from drilling and fracking for shale our watershed now enjoys. While posturing the possibility of a ban on fracking in some parts of our watershed, the resolution opens the door wide to many of the most devastating impacts that drilling and fracking for shale brings to waterways and communities. As a result, we must oppose it," **said Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper.**

"This resolution is one step forward with a giant step backwards. We support a ban on fracking; however, this resolution includes language that allows for the treatment and dumping of fracking waste in the Basin. The whole purpose of a fracking ban is to protect our water from the toxic chemicals of fracking. We will oppose the resolution unless they remove the dangerous language to allow fracking waste dumping and treatment. We're telling the DRBC to ban fracking and don't dump on the Delaware!" **said Jeff Tittel, Director of the New Jersey Sierra Club.**

"Today's action by the commissioners opening up the process to permanently ban fracking in the basin could be a positive step forward. Their press release references the possibly of water withdrawals and waste disposal 'where permitted'. Catskill Mountainkeeper believes a ban on fracking should include all of the impacts of fracking period," **said Wes Gillingham, Associate Director, Catskill Mountainkeeper.**

"The proposed resolution is much weaker than the moratorium currently in place that prohibits water extraction, dumping of fracking waste, and natural gas storage. From the beginning, anti-fracking advocates used the term fracking to refer to the entire process, not just drilling, and we don't plan to settle for any action by the DRBC that doesn't ban all of it," **said Karen Feridun, Founder, Berks Gas Truth.**

"DRBC needs to take strong action to protect the Delaware from all aspects of fracking but the proposed resolution appears to do just the opposite. Making the temporary moratorium on fracking a permanent ban in exchange for enabling many other aspects of fracking like inter-basin transfers of water and wastewater disposal, storage, treatment and disposal within the basin is unacceptable," **said David Pringle, NJ Campaign Director, Clean Water Action.**

"The DRBC's ban resolution must be replaced with a resolution calling for a total ban on all aspects of drilling and fracking throughout the Watershed. The Delaware River Watershed's daily task of delivering clean drinking water to 17 million people will be impossible if the DRBC allows the dumping of frack waste and the withdrawal of our river's precious water for fracking," **said Tracy Carluccio, Deputy Director, Delaware Riverkeeper Network.**

“No regulations can fully protect our communities and the environment from the dangers of fracking and its associated activities. NRDC welcomes the opportunity to demonstrate that a ban on fracking in the Delaware River Basin must also include a ban on all aspects of this dangerous process, including the storage, treatment and disposal of wastewater,” **said Rob Friedman, Policy Advocate, Natural Resources Defense Council.**

“The total health of the Delaware River Basin is imperiled by allowing DRB drilling, waste disposal or storage and the removal of clean water from the basin to facilitate drilling elsewhere is also not acceptable! We are killing ourselves with climate change causing carbon pollution. The DRB has to move forward setting an example for preserving resources and a healthy future,” **said Barbara Arrindell, Director of Damascus Citizens for Sustainability.**

Since 2010, the DRBC has prohibited natural gas extraction anywhere in the Delaware River Basin while they study its potential impacts on water resources, a *de-facto* moratorium that does not allow permits to be issued until natural gas regulations are adopted. The Coalition of organizations and members of the public have long been actively demanding a permanent ban on all gas drilling and fracking within the entire Delaware River Watershed, demonstrating at all DRBC public meetings this year, and submitting to the DRBC Commissioners last month over 65,000 petitions calling for a permanent fracking ban.

The DRBC’s voting members are the Governors of Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey and Delaware and the Army Corps of Engineers representing President Trump. The DRBC is responsible for managing the water resources of the Delaware River Watershed, which includes portions of each of the Basin states and supplies drinking water to up to 17 million people every day, including New York City and Philadelphia. The Delaware River is designated by Congress as a Wild and Scenic River.

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