

For Immediate Release

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Rally to Show Dirty Energy Corporations Philadelphia Is Not a Sacrifice Zone

Philadelphians call for clean and green energy economy

Philadelphia, PA – A rally and press conference was held at Drexel University’s Creese Student Center on Chestnut St. today to protest an oil and industry promotional conference hosted there by the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce’s Council for Growth. People who live in, work in, and love Philadelphia gathered to warn potential investors attending the “Greater Philadelphia: The Next Energy Hub” conference that investing in fossil fuels is a dangerous and self-limiting investment and that people will not tolerate Philadelphia being forced into becoming a sacrifice zone. Philadelphians are already burdened with air and water pollution and refuse to bear the brunt of the dirty and dangerous development the industry is pushing.

Rather than more polluting infrastructure and facilities using the fossil fuels of the last century, signs, banners, and chants called for a green future based on renewable energy, energy efficiency, and green jobs. At a press conference, representatives of neighborhood groups, local green energy businesses, and community leaders protested the dirty energy conference, announced they will fight plans to develop a Philadelphia shale gas and oil “hub”, and demanded a conversion to a clean energy economy. Meanwhile, community members [distributed an open letter to the conference attendees warning them to avoid ill-fated investments in Philadelphia fossil fuel infrastructure.](#)

Speakers at the press conference hit on the rally’s themes: Philadelphia is not for sale to fossil fuel companies; public health and safety is paramount and must be the

priority for policymakers; public involvement is essential in shaping a healthy future for the neighborhoods and communities of the city and people must not be left in the dark about how a dirty energy hub would affect them and their families; a clean and green energy economy provides stable jobs, sustainable growth, and a healthy environment. Speakers were: Kevin Poole, Northeast Grays Ferry Residents Association; Dr. Pouné Saberi, Philadelphia Physicians for Social Responsibility; John Scorsone, SolareAmerica, Matthew Wang, Drexel University student, Fossil Free Drexel.

Kevin Poole, Communications Liaison for the Northeast Grays Ferry Residents Association, Inc. spoke on behalf of the neighborhood, expressing the group's concerns about pollution and safety. The mile-long trains that carry highly volatile domestic crude oil to Philadelphia Energy Solutions facility in Philadelphia cut through his neighborhood, exposing the people who live there to pollution and the risk of catastrophe should there be an accident.

Pouné Saberi, MD, MPH, Board member Philadelphia Physicians for Social Responsibility stated, "The medical community in Philadelphia offers top quality care to keep Philadelphians healthy. The toxic back room deals planned by this business coalition will multiply health hazards for workers and residents. That shows their utter disregard for the hard work that we health care professionals take pride in. If any of the local politicians back this plan without proper assessment of cumulative health and environmental impacts, they will also be showing their lack of dedication in serving our city's most vulnerable and us residents and workers."

"If the goal of this conference is to promote 21st Century job creation that continues Philadelphia's return to prominence on the world stage, they are looking at the wrong energy source. Renewable Energy is the answer for the kind of job and energy creation that doesn't require we put the city on stilts by 2050 or sooner," said **John Scorsone, President and co-founder, SolareAmerica.**

Matthew Wang, Drexel University student activist, Fossil Free Drexel stated "Drexel is committed to becoming the *most civically engaged* university in the United States according to President John A. Fry. So, why then would they host an *exclusive*

executive summit that plans to sell the future of Philadelphia as a fossil fuel industry sacrifice zone? My goal is to see the university stick to the respectable ethics and morals that I know it has. The businesses and institutions that claim to be the pride of the city must engage the community in open and active dialogue on issues that clearly affect all."

"We must stop the pillaging of our environment and communities by the corporations and their servants in the government. We must ensure that public utilities like PGW are publicly owned and operated for the public good and not the demands of maximizing profit for the 1%. Our survival requires that we build a new energy infrastructure without fossil fuels and that is based upon renewable resources. Our scientists tell us that current practices will soon end the ability of the earth to sustain human life. We need to struggle against fossil fuel energy policies that serve the billionaires at the expense of the people like our lives depend on it, because they do," said **Jed Dodd, General Chairman, Pennsylvania Federation BMWED-Teamsters.**

Arthur Berman, Director, Labyrinth Consulting Services, an independent analyst, supplied a written statement critically analyzing the future of shale gas production and the folly of investment in natural gas export and other development based on the uncertainty of supply. He stated, "The U.S. LNG [Liquified Natural Gas] industry has the worst investment track record in the energy sector and its present push to export gas is merely the latest installment of folly." In a document entitled "The Brief Candle of the U.S. Shale Gas Revolution" he explains why an energy hub based on shale gas is a bad long term investment: "The so-called shale gas revolution will be over before Philadelphia completes its doomed gas hub project." See the document at: <http://bit.ly/1w5FBKM>

The organizations submitted a letter to the participants of the "Greater Philadelphia: The Next Energy Hub" conference, which is imbedded.

The organizations supporting the rally include: 350 Philadelphia, Berks Gas Truth, Clean Air Council, Clean Water Action, Delaware Riverkeeper Network, Food & Water Watch, Keystone Catholics, Maypop Collective, North of Washington Avenue Coalition, Penn Environment, Pennsylvania Federation BMWED – Teamsters, Poor

People's Economic Human Rights Campaign, Philadelphia Area Student Fossil Fuel Divestment Campaigns, Philadelphia Be the Change, Philadelphia Interfaith Power and Light, Protecting our Waters, Rising Tide Philly, Sierra Club, Beyond Natural Gas

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE ATTENDEES OF
“GREATER PHILADELPHIA: THE NEXT ENERGY HUB”
December 5, 2014

Ladies & Gentlemen:

Welcome to Philadelphia, home of the Declaration of Independence. We hope that in addition to attending the “Greater Philadelphia: The Next Energy Hub” conference, you will have an opportunity to enjoy our many historic and cultural attractions and go home with a clearer understanding of our community.

Our city has a long history of citizen activism, from the earliest days of our nation through the abolition movement to many contemporary movements for peace and justice. Philadelphia is a living web of neighborhood, civic, religious and issue organizations with a well-established and effective infrastructure of organizations working for social and environmental justice. A well-developed grassroots movement has for years been resisting shale gas development in our watershed, and facilities such as liquefied natural gas plants, frack wastewater processing plants, and Philadelphia infrastructure for fracked shale gas and oil including natural gas liquids (NGLs), pipelines and Bakken crude by rail. We have been developing plans since July, 2013 to resist this newly energized effort to develop our city as a fossil fuel energy hub.

Allow us to apprise you of a few purely geological and economic factors that should concern Marcellus, Utica and Bakken Shale investors:

1. The political climate is not as friendly as you may have been led to believe. Philadelphia City Council has already passed six (6) Resolutions protecting Philadelphia, the Delaware River Watershed, and Pennsylvania from fracking. These include Resolutions for the ongoing moratorium on fracking in the Delaware River Watershed; support for a Pennsylvania State Legislature moratorium on fracking until cumulative impacts are studied (this condition has not been met); a commitment to sue the Delaware River Basin Commission if the moratorium on shale gas development in the Delaware River Basin is lifted;ⁱ and opposition to Act 13’s municipal rights pre-emption clauseⁱⁱ(now declared null and void by Pennsylvania’s Supreme Court).
2. Philadelphia City Council has a demonstrated history of responding to community concerns regarding fossil fuel infrastructure in and around the city. For example, Council acted to defeat a 2006 proposal by Philadelphia Gas Works (PGW) to build a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) export facility.ⁱⁱⁱ More recently, City Council acted to kill a proposal to sell PGW to a private company, despite intense lobbying by the oil and gas industry to move forward with the deal.^{iv}
3. The extent and profitability of Marcellus Shale Play has been exaggerated according to the U. S. Geological Survey, the Potential Gas Committee and the Energy Information Administration.^v These projections are more objective than those of an industry that must project a rosy picture to attract investment.

4. The profitability of any natural gas investment is far from assured, and the Federal Reserve may end its program of near zero-percent short-term interest rates as early as 2015.^{vi}
5. The growing awareness of the impact of climate change on business and infrastructure is raising the risk of stranded assets.^{vii}
6. Booms go bust. Bakken Shale drilling, extraction, waste dumping and flaring will become better regulated as a result of the recent potent New York Times series, “The Downside of the Boom”.^{viii} In addition, operational standards and tank cars for the transport of domestic crude by rail are being upgraded by the federal government. Both processes mean increased expense and reduced profitability for Bakken Shale oil as the boom approaches its bust.

And of course, there is the growing popular resistance to the fossil fuel industry and the burgeoning support for sustainable and renewable energy and energy efficiency.

We realize that you are attracted to the prospect of significant profits and the idea that you would move forward smoothly with your plans once all the pieces were put in place by industry and elected officials. That is not going to happen.

The Keystone XL Pipeline project is an example of what a determined mass movement can do. In 2005 that project was considered a done deal. Almost ten years later it is still bleeding money and not much has been built except a bigger, stronger and more determined environmental movement. The same can be said for countless high-flying plans put in place without the knowledge or consent of those most affected by the impact of those plans.

We are here, today and tomorrow, to defend the health and safety of our communities and the health and welfare of future generations. We will knock on every door in impacted communities and talk to our neighbors face to face. We will spread the message from the pulpit and in the streets. We are the ones at risk for oil train explosions, asthma and cancer-causing emissions and devastating super-storms with the flooded streets and economic havoc they bring.

The Union of Concerned Scientists released a study this fall showing that if fossil fuel use continues on its present course, within a few decades Philadelphia will experience 200 flood events per year instead of the current 19.^{ix} We will not allow you to destroy Philadelphia in order to “develop” it.

Meanwhile, we will continue building a vision for our city shaped by sustainable businesses, energy efficiency and renewable energy producers, our many cooperatives and civic associations, forward-thinking entrepreneurs, our outstanding schools and hospitals, our best scientists, educators, health professionals and the good people who live, work and invest here. We welcome the participation of anyone who would like to work with us in developing living-wage green jobs, affordable, energy efficient housing, the rehabilitation of existing inefficient buildings, the improvement and expansion of public transit, the repair of our existing infrastructure and the building of new, green infrastructure.

Sincerely,

350 Philadelphia
Berks Gas Truth
Clean Air Council

Clean Water Action
Delaware Riverkeeper Network
Food & Water Watch
Keystone Catholics
Maypop Collective
North of Washington Avenue Coalition
Penn Environment
Pennsylvania Federation BMWED – Teamsters
Philadelphia Area Student Fossil Fuel Divestment Campaigns
Philadelphia Be the Change
Philadelphia Interfaith Power and Light
Philadelphia Chapter Physicians for Social Responsibility
Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign
Protecting our Waters
Rising Tide Philly
Sierra Club, Beyond Natural Gas

ⁱ <https://protectingourwaters.wordpress.com/2011/10/13/philadelphia-city-council-unanimously-passes-resolution-to-sue-drbc-demand-impact-studies-forbid-fracking-for-now/>

ⁱⁱ <http://planphilly.com/articles/2012/09/27/council-resolution-supports-commonwealth-court-e2-80-99s-decision-declare-act-13-unconstitutional>

ⁱⁱⁱ "Philadelphia City Council Opposes PGW's Proposed LNG Import Terminal." *Natural Gas Intelligence*.

<http://www.naturalgasintel.com/articles/14242-philadelphia-city-council-opposes-pgw-s-proposed-lng-import-terminal> February 20, 2006

^{iv} DeHuff, Jenny "Council kills PGW deal." *Philadelphia Daily News*. <http://www.philly.com/philly/blogs/cityhall/Council-kills-PGW-deal.html> October 27, 2014.

^v <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/25/us/25gas.html>

^{vi} Loder, Asjlyn. "Shale drillers feast on junk debt to stay on treadmill." *Bloomberg*. April 30, 2014; Cunningham, Nick. "How rising interest rates could spell the end of the U.S. energy boom." *Oilprice.com*. September 25, 2014.

^{vii} <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-12-05/introducing-our-carbon-risk-valuation-too>

^{viii} http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/11/23/us/north-dakota-oil-boom-downside.html?_r=0

^{ix} <http://philadelphia.cbslocal.com/2014/10/09/report-climate-change-will-worsen-flooding-all-along-east-coast/#.VHY-7BcbKaE.mailto>