



For Immediate Release
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Delaware River Basin Commission
Holds Trenton NJ Hearing on
Draft Natural Gas Development Regulations
Thursday Feb. 24

Trenton, NJ – A Public Hearing on natural gas development in the Delaware River Watershed is being held in Trenton at the War Memorial Thursday, February 24 from 1:30 pm to 5:00 pm and from 6:00 to 9:00 pm. The Delaware River Basin Commission has issued Draft Natural Gas Development Regulations that would allow deep drilling to extract natural gas from shale formations that underlie large portions of the Delaware River Basin. The draft rules were issued December 9, 2010 with a public comment period that closes March 16, 2011.

Marcellus shale and other gas bearing formations are being exploited by drillers over the past three years in several states. Pennsylvania and New York contain what is expected to be rich deposits of natural gas in the mile-deep Marcellus formation, covering about 36% of the drainage of the Delaware River Watershed. Hydrocarbons are also found in other geologic formations, including parts of central Pennsylvania and New Jersey; while these are not actively being drilled at this time there is already discussion of future drilling.

The DRBC oversees the water resources of the Delaware River Basin and is charged with protecting the water supply for 15 million people who rely on the River for drinking water. The DRBC issued the draft rules before conducting a cumulative impact assessment of the ramifications of gas drilling on the Delaware River Watershed. The draft regulations with prior scientific analysis were issued over registered objections from New York State, NJ Congressman Rush Holt, NY Congressman Maurice Hinchey, NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg, the New York City Council, Philadelphia City Council, numerous environmental and conservation organizations, thousands of individuals who have attended and spoken on the record at DRBC public meetings and at least 8,000

written comments submitted between April and December, 2010. Since the premature release of the rules, thousands of letters have been submitted to the DRBC in protest and calling for expanded public input. Last week six Pennsylvania legislators from the Delaware Valley called on the DRBC to expand the public process and both Philadelphia and New York City Councils announced they'd be holding their own hearings and submitting the testimony to the DRBC.

In recognition of the potential damage of gas drilling on the water resources and environments of the region, the DRBC placed a moratorium on gas drilling in the Basin until rules were developed. The draft rules issued provide only 90 days for written comment, and only 2 days of hearings which fail to include the two largest water drinkers of the Delaware River basin, New York City and Philadelphia, and fail to include adequate availability in downstream basin states, including Delaware.

"The DRBC's proposed rules do not meet the Commission's required legal mandate – to preserve the exceptional water quality and outstanding assets of the Delaware River, to protect our clean drinking water from degradation," said Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper. "The rules were rushed out before the science was done and it shows. The public needs to speak up and remind the DRBC of its responsibility to Do No Harm", said van Rossum.

"The future of the Delaware River is at stake. We need to keep a moratorium in place until the EPA and USGS studies are done. We then need to have stronger rules that will adequately protect the Delaware River. These proposed rules will allow the Delaware River to die the death of a thousand cuts by polluting or destroying one of the most important river systems in the country. We need to have rules in place that will protect the drinking water of 15 million people, including 3 million in New Jersey," Jeff Tittel, Director of New Jersey Sierra Club.

"It is unconscionable that risky gas drilling may be implemented in a region where 15 million people rely on clean, chemical-free drinking water. Instead of moving ahead hastily with inadequate regulations, the Delaware River Basin Commission needs to stop moving forward to allow drilling. The only ones who benefit in the rush to drill are corporations that are destroying our communities in their quest for profit." said Karina Wilkinson, Regional Organizer, Food & Water Watch, a consumer advocacy group working towards common sense policies that result in healthy, safe food and access to safe and affordable drinking water.

The Trenton Hearing follows two hearings held upriver in Honesdale PA and Liberty NY on Tuesday, February 22. According to those present, hundreds of people showed up to the hearings, some by the busload. People lined up hours ahead to sign up to speak as required by DRBC hearing rules. The Hearing in Trenton is expected to be much the same. Commenters will have two minutes to speak and are encouraged to arrive two hours ahead to sign up to speak (numbered tickets will be given out by DRBC starting one hour prior to each session). Written comment can be handed in to the Hearing Officer. Comments can also be submitted by mail and by email portal: http://www.state.nj.us/drbc/notice_naturalgas-draftregs.htm . Delaware Riverkeeper Network is also facilitating comment submission through its website: <http://www.delawariverkeeper.org/act-now/urgent-details.aspx?Id=66>

For more information on natural gas: www.delawariverkeeper.org

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