



For Immediate Release

November 2, 2023

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Delaware Riverkeeper Network Objects to Governor Shapiro and CNX Alliance

Delaware Riverkeeper Network objects to the announcement today by Governor Josh Shapiro that Pennsylvania has joined with natural gas company CNX Resources to advance shale gas development in Pennsylvania. This agreement is purported to push fracking [while using](#) “commonsense measures that prioritize public health and safety and ensure the natural gas industry is performing its work in line with the highest standards”. Delaware Riverkeeper Network considers this claim to fly in the face of well-established science, community experiences, and the tracking of environmental impacts suffered as a result of the fracking industry.

CNX mentioned it has been in Pennsylvania just shy of 166 years, but it has not been a positive history where they started out as a mammoth coal mining company. Coal mining carries a shameful legacy of extensive degradation to humans and natural ecosystems, including Pennsylvania’s streams and rivers. Coal-fired power plants emit more than 60 different hazardous air pollutants and wreak havoc on the climate. CNX became the harbinger of the fracking industry in Pennsylvania with their first fracking wells popping up in the mid 2000’s and their history of the [spilling](#) of natural gas production fluids in recent years.

This announcement was presented by Governor Shapiro and CNX as a way to highlight the “radical transparency” of CNX operations such as “independent” air sampling monitoring results of two new well sites. They also are pledging to share monitoring data from ongoing gas extraction sites but that data will be collected and reported by CNX, hardly inspiring public confidence in the results.

The agreement is supposed to also guarantee full disclosure of chemicals used in fracking operations. The devil is in the details on this issue. As has been [illustrated](#) time and [again](#), federal protections, private trade secret laws, and the unwillingness of DEP to share the chemical information about what companies use in drilling in fracking has stymied the many attempts by the public to have all the information we need to know what chemicals are being injected by gas drilling and fracking in Pennsylvania. It was not stated that this information would be made public. Will it and how will they skirt federal-level roadblocks to this vital information?

The Governor in his statements also highlighted Pennsylvania Environmental Council’s presence at the event being the wholesale voice of the environmental community and environmental nonprofits. This

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wholesale stamp disregards the voices of frontline communities and those who are experiencing the devastating first-hand impacts of shale gas development - the people who are the real experts and who justly represent impacted communities. It also discounts other environmental organizations, local municipalities, health professionals, and the scientific community, who all have a say in how such an agreement would be carried out. But they didn't – this was cooked up by a select few out of the public eye.

While CNX made statements that they will prove unequivocally there are no adverse impacts from these operations, we have seen from prior years that fracking has serious health consequences for the communities around it. The University of Pittsburgh studies on [asthma](#), [birth outcomes](#), [childhood cancer](#), and [compendium of harms](#) of fracking and oil and gas infrastructure prove the unequivocal harm caused by this industry. Even the effort by the so-called Center for Sustainable Shale Development, which was touted during the press event, was [reviewed by experts](#) and shown to be wholly ineffective - in fact, that attempt to soft-sell fracking ended up as an epic failure due to industry resistance and misinformation.

While Governor Shapiro [said](#) his administration is setting “a new standard for Pennsylvania’s natural gas to be produced in the most responsible and sustainable way”, natural gas and the operations of fracking itself cannot be sustainable, not under any manufactured circumstances. We know from the already-published thousands of independent expert reports and air studies, water studies, and health investigations that the destruction of the environment and the damage to human health is unavoidable as long as you are fracking and drilling. The very act itself entails, to name a few impacts: injecting toxic chemicals into the earth; deep geologic pollutants such as radioactive elements, harsh salts, and heavy metals being brought to the surface by extraction; toxic wastewater to be disposed; air pollution; and the destruction of the natural environment, including our waterways and groundwater.

CNX and other companies are creating a legacy of contamination and degradation that now Pennsylvania's Governor Shapiro is enabling with this announcement. And, last but not least, the climate crisis has already brought catastrophe that we can only address by dramatically ratcheting back greenhouse gas emissions, methane chief among them here. Continuing to support fracking and drilling is a recipe for disaster for the Commonwealth. Pennsylvania needs to play its part in a truly clean and green energy future by abandoning fracking and instead developing greenhouse gas-free, renewable energy sources. Continuing fracking operations is not the way to do this, it inevitably undermines these essential goals.

Delaware Riverkeeper Network would like to hear Governor Shapiro announce a campaign to replace gas development with family-supporting and health-friendly jobs and programs using clean, renewable, and self-sustaining energy so that Pennsylvania is part of the solution to our health, environmental and climate crisis, not part of the problem.

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