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More Than 100,000 Petitions Demanding Fracking Ban Delivered

Governor Murphy asked to vote for a COMPLETE fracking and fracking waste ban in Delaware River Basin

Trenton – Representatives of New Jersey organizations submitted 104,101 signed petitions to Governor Murphy at his West State Street office today after a State House news conference. The petitions, collected by groups representing members in all four states that are part of the Delaware River Watershed, asks the Governors to vote at the Delaware River Basin Commission for a complete and permanent ban on fracking and its activities. The petitions call for a ban on fracking throughout the Delaware River Basin, a ban on frack wastewater processing and discharges in the Basin, and a ban on water exports from the Delaware River Watershed to fuel fracking elsewhere.

The Delaware River Basin Commission, made up of the governors of Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey and Delaware, and the Army Corps of Engineers representing the federal government, are expected to vote in the coming months on the proposed fracking ban. Recent developments such as the EPA's report on the high toxicity of waste produced by fracking, the Trump Administration's movement to relax frack waste disposal regulations along with other environmental protections and recent scientific reports with dire warnings about climate change – which is worsened by methane released by fracking – provide the backdrop for the new petitions being submitted.

“We’re delivering 104,000+ petitions addressed to the Governors who will vote at the Delaware River Basin Commission on the proposed fracking ban, deciding the fate of the Delaware River Watershed, to Governor Murphy so he is certain he has the public’s support for a COMPLETE frack ban. Frack wastewater discharges and the depletion of water for fracking outside of the basin will threaten the drinking water for up to 17 million people, including 2.9 million New Jerseyans, and bring toxic pollution to the river, the estuary and the Bay, ruining the irreplaceable natural assets of the river and impacting the health of our communities. We are speaking loud and clear for a complete ban that prohibits fracking, frack wastewater discharges and the export of water from the Delaware for fracking and nothing less. We can’t count on the federal government for protection so we ask Governor Murphy to band together with his fellow Basin states to adopt a permanent, COMPLETE fracking ban once and for all,” said **Tracy Carluccio, Deputy Director, Delaware Riverkeeper Network.**

The New Jersey Legislature has proposed SCR150, a resolution co-sponsored by Senate Environment Vice Chair Linda Greenstein, to urge Gov. Murphy to oppose the DRBC proposed language to allow for the disposal of fracking waste in the Delaware River watershed that could impact the drinking water for New Jersey residents. SCR150 has passed out of the Senate Environment Committee.

“Fracking and fracking waste should get kept out of the Delaware River watershed. New Jersey’s drinking water sources shouldn’t be placed in danger by out-of-state fracking companies discharging their pollution into our watershed,” **said Sen. Linda Greenstein, Vice Chair of the Senate Environment Committee and a lead co-sponsor of SCR150.** “I urge Gov. Murphy to do everything he can to ensure the DRBC moves forward with a full ban on fracking and fracking waste in the Delaware watershed.”

“The Delaware River and its tributaries provide clean drinking water for my district and 3 million other New Jersey residents. We shouldn’t allow fracking companies in Pennsylvania to use the Delaware River watershed as a dumping ground for their fracking waste and a test case for fracking. Fracking and fracking waste should be nowhere near our drinking water sources. It’s imperative that Gov. Murphy uphold his commitment to keep fracking and fracking waste out of the Delaware River watershed by voting to strengthen the current DRBC regulations. The current proposal weakens the protections for our watershed, and I urge the Governor to reject these regulations until they ban both fracking and fracking waste from impacting our watershed,” **said Sen. Kip Bateman (R-16), a member of the Senate Environment Committee.**

“We need a complete ban on fracking activities by the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC), including not allowing dumping fracking waste or taking water for fracking activities and water withdrawal. DRBC’s current proposal to ban fracking still allows fracking waste in the Delaware Basin, creating incentive for Elcon to be built. We could see the treated waste from the facility being dumped right on top of our drinking water sources. This could lead to pollution and contaminated drinking water,” **said Jeff Tittel, Director of the New Jersey Sierra Club.** “We have been concerned that Murphy’s staff is hesitating to live up to Murphy’s commitment on a full ban. That is why we plan to deliver over 100,000 petitions urging Murphy for a complete ban. Governor Murphy is chair of the Delaware River Basin Commission so we not only need him to lead but to ban fracking waste and water withdrawal in the Basin.”

“The Delaware River watershed is under attack like never more. Frackers literally wait along its borders, eyeing opportunities to start gas drilling. For the last seven years, our watershed has benefited from a moratorium on drilling and outright restrictions on dumping fracking waste by the Delaware River Basin Commission,” **said Doug O’Malley, director of Environment New Jersey.** “These protections are now in peril and we need Gov. Murphy to clearly state that these DRBC fracking waste loopholes can’t stand on his watch. There is no reason to allow the threat of fracking to despoil the drinking water source for more than 3 million New Jersey residents.”

“We’re here today to call on Governor Murphy to come out strong in support of a complete ban on fracking in the Delaware River Basin. The commission’s draft rules do not go far enough to protect the drinking water for millions of people in the state of New Jersey. Banning fracking while giving the rights to fracking corporations to take our water, pollute it with contaminants that are harmful to human health, and then return it for us to drink will be catastrophic. That’s why we call on the governor to support a complete ban on fracking. We need the strongest protections in place to protect our air, land, and water: That means a ban on fracking, a ban on water withdrawals, and a ban on fracking waste,” **said Lena Smith, Policy Advocate, Food & Water Watch.**

“Trump’s promoting fossil fuel exports, his clean water rule rollbacks, and the leading national and international scientific expert reports documenting the climate crisis is accelerating, all these past few months, create a dire emergency. The alarm bell is ringing and state leadership must come to the rescue. Governor Murphy and the other Democratic governors on the DRBC must answer the call by enacting a total ban on fracking, including wastewater and water withdrawal,” **said David Pringle of Clean Water Action,** which assisted in the petition drive and secured over 6,000 personal, handwritten letters to Governor Murphy.

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Organizations that collected signatures on the ban petition include:

Berks Gas Truth
Bucks Environmental Action
Catskill Mountainkeeper
Clean Water Action NJ
CREDO
Damascus Citizens for Sustainability
Delaware Riverkeeper Network
Delaware Sierra Club
Environment New Jersey
Food and Water Watch
Natural Resources Defense Council
NJ Sierra Club
Pennsylvania Chapter Sierra Club
Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter

The Petition:

DRBC – ENACT A FULL BAN ON FRACKING

To the Delaware River Basin Commission voting members - the Governors of New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware, representing the Basin states, and the Army Corps of Engineers, representing the federal government:

We, the undersigned, call for the Delaware River Basin Commission to enact a permanent ban on natural gas drilling and fracking and all related activities (including drilling; fracking; fracking wastewater storage, processing and discharges; and water withdrawals for drilling and fracking) throughout the Delaware River Watershed.

During the eight years of the DRBC drilling moratorium, scientific studies have exposed environmental harms and documented damaging health effects, leading New York and Maryland to ban fracking. The overwhelming weight of evidence shows that shale gas simply cannot be extracted safely.

The DRBC is responsible for protecting the water resources of the Delaware River Watershed — upon which 15 million people rely for their drinking water. This water supply and the Wild and Scenic Delaware River are irreplaceable. The time to enact a permanent ban is NOW.

Background:

Since 2010 the DRBC has prohibited natural gas extraction projects 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.

A mounting call by the public for transforming the current moratorium on natural gas drilling, fracking and related activities in the Delaware River Watershed into a permanent ban has resulted in the proposed fracking ban but the DRBC also included in draft regulations the allowance of frack wastewater discharges in the Delaware River Watershed and the withdrawal of fresh water from the basin for fracking. The draft regulations were issued Nov. 30, 2017 and the comment period closed March 31, 2018. The DRBC is now deliberating on how to proceed.

There has been a broad public demand for a complete fracking ban, including banning wastewater and water withdrawals, expressing that it is unacceptable to allow the toxic pollution from frack wastewater and the depletion of the river's water for fracking. All evidence proves how this would cause serious harm to the watershed and the water supply of up to 17 million people.

Organizations point out that recent decisions from the Trump Administration make it more urgent than ever that Governors Murphy (NJ), Cuomo (NY), Wolf (PA) and Carney (DE) act now to pass a complete ban on fracking and all of its associated activities throughout the Delaware River Basin. Even as the United Nation's climate experts gave dire warnings about how we need to urgently act to move away from fossil fuel extraction and burning, including fracked gas, to avoid catastrophic climate change, (see the report here: <https://bit.ly/2IOH2bK>), and the U.S. National Climate Assessment Report warns the impacts of climate change are already being felt in communities across the country and will worsen as more frequent and intense extreme weather and climate-related events occur, (see report here: <https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/>), President Trump denies that humans cause climate change. Despite releasing an EPA report that showed the toxic dangers of fracking wastewater to our waterways, (see report here: <https://bit.ly/2yywFoF>), the Trump Administration's EPA may undo the prohibition on the acceptance of frack wastewater at the nation's municipal sewage facilities and ease current water quality protections, paving the way for frack wastewater to be dumped in surface water, including the Delaware River Watershed (see details here: <https://www.epa.gov/eg/study-oil-and-gas-extraction-wastewater-management>).

As an autonomous agency formed under federal law to manage the shared waters of the Basin, the DRBC members are responsible for equitably protecting the drinking water supplies of 15 to 17 million people in all four states, including the metropolitan areas of New York City and Philadelphia, and the federally designated Wild and Scenic Delaware River.

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