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## **Organizations Demand an Expanded Public Process on Fracking Rules for Delaware River Basin**

*A just and inclusive public input process is critical to evaluate proposal that bans fracking but still puts drinking water at risk from wastewater disposal and water depletion*

*Washington Crossing, PA* – Representatives of organizations and members of the public spoke directly to the Delaware River Basin Commissioners today during a comment period at the Delaware River Basin Commissioner's (DRBC) public business meeting demanding a just public input process for the draft fracking regulations and proposed ban on high-volume hydraulic fracturing in the Delaware River Watershed.

The DRBC issued draft natural gas regulations on November 30 that are open for public comment through 5:00pm, February 28, 2018. But the agency set a public input process that the public is heavily criticizing as very difficult to navigate. For example, there are only Public Hearings in two locations, both in Pennsylvania, both difficult to access, with no hearings in New York, New Jersey or Delaware and, for some inexplicable reason, it's required that people register on line by December 31- right in the middle of holidays - to speak at the January 23 and 25 Hearings. Written comments

can only be submitted through an on-line system, prohibiting written comments to be filed through the postal service, email, or hand delivery. This gauntlet actually limits public access on the critical issue of whether or not fracking and all its activities, including frack wastewater dumping and water withdrawals for fracking, will be banned in the Basin - a decision that will indelibly impact the future of the Delaware River Watershed, the Wild and Scenic Delaware River, the communities throughout the Watershed, and the water supplies for 15 to 17 million people.

The proposed fracking rules were not on the agenda but people saw this as a rare opportunity to ask the Commissioners - who are the ultimate deciders at the DRBC - for changes that would add accessibility, time, and fairness to the public process on this crucial issue. This may be the only meeting with all of the Commissioners present during the draft fracking regulation public comment period.

"The process the DRBC has put in place is unjust. People throughout the basin feel strongly about preserving all of the protections that have been in place since 2010. They want a full fracking ban. They should be able to be heard regardless of whether or not they have access to computers to submit comments or have cars to get to difficult to access hearing locations. They should not have to travel for hours, miss work, or try to figure out how to pay for parking just to be able to participate in a process that is the public's one opportunity to be heard," **said Karen Feridun, Founder of Berks Gas Truth.**

"While there are many positives to the fracking regulations proposed by the DRBC, there is a lot that needs to be fixed in order for our watershed to be truly protected. Rather than present a process to allow people to bring forth the science, facts, and information needed for a good outcome, DRBC seems to be carefully crafting a process designed to shut people out. The process needs to be fixed and we are here today to ensure the Commissioners hear us on that point," **said Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper.**

"DRBC seems to keep forgetting or caring that its charge is to protect the public's water and the public is its base. The proposed public process and the proposed fracking rules do not protect the public's water well enough and do not permit the public

meaningful, plentiful public comment. DRBC needs more public hearings in more public places at more public friendly times in all the Delaware River Basin's regions and states," **David Pringle, NJ Campaign Director, Clean Water Action.**

"The DRBC needs to get the frack out of the Delaware Valley!. Not only do we need a complete ban on fracking in the Valley, but they cannot allow fracking waste to be dumped here either. The purpose of a ban is to protect the drinking water for 17 million people. We can't do that if they steal our water for fracking or dump toxic chemicals into our waterways, " **said Jeff Tittel, Director of the New Jersey Sierra Club.** "The DRBC needs to schedule more than just two hearings and extend the comment period to give citizens across the Basin a chance to play a part in the process. We're telling the DRBC to do their job to represent the people and protect the environment of the Basin!"

"That the DRBC is proposing to prohibit fracking is excellent, that the DRBC is making it a difficult and technology dependent process to comment on the proposed regulations is not good. No postal letters? Only hearings where there is no public transportation? And only two days of hearings and only at the extreme ends of the Basin? Is this even a legal process?" **said Barbara Arrindell, Director, Damascus Citizens for Sustainability.**

"Banning fracking while allowing frack waste and water withdrawals puts the drinking water for millions at risk," **said Lena Smith of Food & Water Watch.** "Any deal that would allow toxic, radioactive fracking waste into the watershed should be a non-starter for the governors responsible for protecting the Delaware River watershed."

"The DRBC has proposed regulations that will affect the future of our lives and this region for years. That is why we need easier access to making comments on these important regulations. They should allow for written comments, give us more hearings and ensure the people of this region have a voice the process," **said Wes Gillingham, Associate Director, Catskill Mountainkeeper.**

"A fracking ban would be historic, but these regulations still put drinking water at risk of contamination from the cocktail of chemicals found in wastewater,"

**said Kimberly Ong, Staff Attorney, Natural Resources Defense Council.** “The public deserves a real chance to share the concerns they have about how fracking—and everything that goes with it—would impact their health and communities.”

“One of the most important decisions to ever be made by the DRBC regarding the water resources of the Delaware River Watershed – a frack ban and proposed regulations - requires a robust and inclusive public participation process. Everything from the scarcity of public hearings to the restrictive logistics of submitting verbal and written comment, to the short length of time of the comment period, especially considering the holidays, is unjust and limits public input. This is so wrong but can be easily transformed into an open and fair process if the Commissioners listen to the public’s plea for the opportunity to meaningfully participate,” **said Tracy Carluccio, Deputy Director, Delaware Riverkeeper Network.**

To see the letter filed with the DRBC for public input process changes, go here: <http://bit.ly/2AqjQ2H> and to see some Talking Points about the unfair process, go here: <http://bit.ly/2kZcUIT>.

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