

**Delaware Riverkeeper Network ~ Berks Gas Truth
Pipeline Safety Coalition~ Clean Air Council
Bucks CCAP ~ Holland CCAP
West Amwell Citizens Against the Pipeline
Environment NJ ~ PennEnvironment
Sierra Club NJ ~ Sierra Club PA
Clean Water Action, NJ ~ Food & Water Watch
Sourland Conservancy ~ Gas Drilling Awareness Coalition
PEACE (Palisades Environmental Action Committee Educators)**

For Immediate Release

June 8, 2015

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***Community and Environmental Leaders Unfurl Scroll of Signatures to Urge
Seven Separate Hearings on PennEast Pipeline Proposal from the Delaware
River Basin Commission***

Washington Crossing, PA: Organizations and individuals representing the communities to be impacted by the proposed PennEast Pipeline have asked the Executive Director of the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) to reconsider the agency's decision to seek joint hearings on the proposed pipeline with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. An advance copy of the petition language with notification of the groundswell of signatures was emailed to Mr. Tambini, the DRBC Executive Director, on the evening of June 8. Wednesday, June 9, representatives of the #ComeToMeDRBC petition drive will be attending the DRBC quarterly Commissioners meeting to deliver the petition and signatures in person.

After just 6 days, over 3,500 signatures were received on the petition, a copy of the petition can be found at: <http://bit.ly/ComeToMeDRBC>. The petition and its signatures will be presented on an unfurled scroll. The petition, and representatives of over 16 organizations opposed to the pipeline, are urging DRBC to hold 7 hearings in communities across the length of the proposed pipeline route and to conduct those hearings entirely separately from hearings the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission would be holding on the proposed project.

The #ComeToMeDRBC effort was prompted by DRBC rejecting such a request last week. In response to a May 13, 2015 letter submitted by the Delaware Riverkeeper Network urging DRBC “to retract your suggestion of a joint FERC/DRBC public hearing process regarding the PennEast Pipeline Project.”

DRBC Executive Director responded:

“... all members of the public will have ample opportunity to submit written comments to DRBC that can be more extensive than any oral testimony given. Whether or not oral testimony is limited to ensure that as many individuals as possible have an opportunity to provide it, the opportunity to submit written comments eliminates any risk that time limitations on oral presentations will prevent a public comment from being effectively made and considered.

Be assured that DRBC is committed to a public process that affords interested persons an opportunity to comment on the issues of concern to them. We are also committed to an efficient use of resources – those of both the agencies and the public.”

In a responsive press release statement, **#ComeToMeDRBC organizers and participants said:**

The DRBC should ensure that every member of the pipeline-threatened communities gets a fair and reasonable chance to be heard. Holding a limited number of joint hearings where people will get a mere 3 minutes to speak to both DRBC and FERC literally cuts in half the time the public has to testify while doubling the complexity and quantity of issues to be addressed. DRBC says it wants to be efficient with time and resources, we believe it is more efficient for 3 to 5 DRBC staffers to travel to the pipeline threatened communities rather than to have hundreds of residents have to travel long distances to attend a limited number of hearings. Limited hearings also means more chance that time will run out and people will be turned away without having a chance to speak; that is what happened during FERC scoping sessions.

So today we are calling on DRBC to honor the peoples’ time and the peoples’ need to be heard. Seven hearings across 100 miles of pipeline where the public can focus their limited comment time on one agency and its applicable regulations is not unreasonable, especially when considering how much is at stake.

Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper explained: “DRBC and FERC have 2 entirely different missions to advance and decisions to make: for DRBC it is about protecting water resources, for FERC it is about providing energy for customers; DRBC’s decision is about whether to permit the project, FERC’s is about how to advance the project. One opportunity to testify to both agencies given these fundamental differences simply won’t work. And asserting that the ability to submit written comment suffices in place

of a fair opportunity to speak directly to the agency fails to understand or honor the importance and value of public testimony and the rights of the public to be heard. We need 7 seven, DRBC-specific meetings in order to ensure fair access by all those who are being harmed by this pipeline project – it is time to start thinking about the needs of the community rather than the comfort and ease of the pipeline company or the agencies.”

"The DRBC Commissioners claim they had the convenience of the public in mind when they offered the proposal of one joint public hearing on the PennEast pipeline. Citizens affected by the pipeline have been inconvenienced since plans for the pipeline were announced last August. They will continue to be inconvenienced if the pipeline is built. And, in the grand scheme of things, inconvenience has been and will continue to be the least of their problems where the pipeline is concerned. The public hearing is a time-honored part of an inclusive public participation process where people get to articulate those problems. Passing off perfunctory adherence to a process as concern for affected citizens who have nothing to gain and everything to lose is embarrassing and unacceptable," said **Karen Feridun, Founder of Berks Gas Truth.**

“ We should not sacrifice thorough review to the altar of efficiency. The Delaware River is a unique and vital resource in our area, and as such we should strive to do our utmost to ensure it remains protected and its waters safe. Combining these hearings in the interest of speed will do nothing but de-emphasize the importance of the Delaware and remove valuable time that could be spent focusing on its unique characteristics. If PennEast is approved & construction is started it cannot be undone. It will be a permanent scar across our landscape and threat to our people and environment. Therefore we call for a separate set of hearings by the DRBC so that it can fulfill its duties” said **Mike Spille, West Amwell Citizens Against the Pipeline.**

"After many years of wading through the regulatory processes at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, we have seen them time and time again permit extremely destructive pipeline projects," said **Joseph Otis Minott, Esq., Executive Director of the Clean Air Council.** "This a chance for the Delaware River Basin Commission to take a stand in protecting the Delaware River and all of its tributaries. In particular, the DRBC should conduct an independent and thorough review of the proposed PennEast Pipeline that is independent from the biased view of FERC."

"108 miles of pipeline, 88 waterways, 44 wetlands, 30 parks, dozens of communities, and just 2 minutes to voice your opinion? The math just doesn't add up. The DRBC says they are 'committed to a public process that affords interested persons an opportunity to comment on issues of concern to them'" but their actions speaker louder than words. Will DRBC hide behind rubberstamping FERC or hold at least 7 independent public hearings in impacted communities and protect the Delaware River?" said **David**

Pringle, NJ Campaign Director for Clean Water Action.

"It's horrifying that the residents have to work so hard just to get a hearing with our commission that's supposed to protect our river," said **Tina Venini, resident of Riegelsville, PA**. Tina added, "How can the DRBC not understand the urgency of the communities calling out for action. We are working parents who've been spending massive amounts of time trying to be heard by our commission sworn to protect us from this threat to our region."

"The DRBC's mission states that it will be the "leader in protecting the Basin's water resources" and that it will "seek increased public involvement." The DRBC's mission is totally different from the FERC's mission. We respectfully request that DRBC's Commissioners act in accordance with the Commission's mission: (1) protect the Delaware River Basin by opposing the proposed PennEast Pipeline and (2) hold several public meetings, separate from the FERC, in communities that will be severely impacted by the proposed pipeline," offered **Caroline Katmann, Executive Director of the Sourland Conservancy**.

"For nearly five years the DRBC have listened to many Pennsylvanians, keeping many of the dangers of fracking at bay. To now allow this pipeline to cut through the area, with almost no opportunity for people to weigh in, would be a complete reversal from the DRBC's past diligence in protecting this critical natural resource," stated **Adam Garber, Field Director, PennEnvironment**

"The Delaware River Basin Commission needs to recognize the importance of listening to the concerns of the communities potentially affected by the PennEast Pipeline Project. A joint hearing in the presence of FERC, with comments limited to two minutes, will not allow for open discourse on this issue. In fact, it will prohibit the honest and open dialogue that should be an essential part of this scoping process. We respectfully request that the DRBC work with the affected communities and schedule a number of public hearings, without FERC's presence, so that the affected residents might be presented a fair opportunity to voice their concerns. Furthermore, I ask that these meetings be scheduled at a reasonable time of day that does not require individuals to compromise their nine-to-five workday in order to testify," **Arianne Elinich, resident and member of Bucks CCAP**.

"The DRBC must exercise its authority as bestowed upon it in the signing of the Compact in matters of planning and development within the Delaware River Basin, without holding hands with FERC. FERC's mission is fatly unrelated to that of the DRBC. To hold joint meetings at this juncture is not only unproductive, but inappropriate. The FERC has conducted their hearings, and now DRBC must go to the people and hear their testimony. Affected communities are crying out for their voices to be heard - seven meetings, in locales that accommodate the community and their ability to participate are appropriate and within the ability of the DRBC. To deny this request would set the stage for any pipeline to skirt the

authority of the DRBC and voices of the people," stated **Lynda Farrell, Executive Director, Pipeline Safety Coalition.**

" We the people deserve at least 7 hearings along the length of the pipeline path exclusively with the DRBC to realistically be able to have the effected communities' concerns be heard. It's such an enormous project with so many effected this is the only way to fairly reach us all." **Offered Joanne Kilgour, Director, Sierra Club PA Chapter.**

"It will be very inconvenient for many of those along the 110 mile pipeline route to attend a meeting that is scheduled a distance from their home. Luzerne County is fast becoming a pipeline hub with the proposed PennEast, Atlantic Sunrise, Marc II, Diamond East Pipeline Projects along with the Leidy Southeast Expansion Project. Residents of Luzerne County who wish to attend and comment at the DRBC/FERC meeting should not have to travel a substantial distance to do so. It doesn't make sense for the DRBC to hold a joint meeting with FERC on the proposed PennEast Pipeline project. These are agencies with very different mandates. FERC's job is to promote pipeline projects and natural gas export terminals. DRBC's job is to live up to the quote on its website from US Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes: 'A river is more than an amenity, it is a treasure.' The DRBC meeting for public comment should be independent of FERC." said **Diane Dreier, Vice President, Gas Drilling Awareness Coalition.**

"DRBC should learn from FERC's lessons on PennEast public hearings -- there's unprecedented concern about this pipeline. A single joint hearing with FERC will disenfranchise the public," said **Doug O'Malley, Director of Environment New Jersey.** "PennEast would cut a massive ecological scar through the heart of the Delaware Valley; holding seven public hearings would be an appropriate response. Is it too much to ask DRBC Director Tambini to listen to all communities along the 110 mile route?"

"The Delaware River Basin Commission needs to do an independent and thorough review of the PennEast Pipeline. They must allow for extensive public input and scrutiny as well as an honest and scientifically based environmental assessment of the impacts from this pipeline. This pipeline will cause a scar in environmentally sensitive land and have major impacts to water quality and damage to the environment. DRBC must do their job and ensure an open public process. The only way they can do this is not to partner with FERC. FERC is a cheerleader for the industry they are supposed to regulate and will undermine the transparency and credibility of what the DRBC will do. There should be at least 7 hearings as well as testimony from the public. The only way we can have a real review is if DRBC will Keep the FERC out of the public meetings," said **Jeff Tittel, Director of NJ Sierra Club.**

"The DRBC hearings could be a lifeline for those communities directly threaten and by the PennEast Pipeline and disempowered by the previous FERC hearings, sporadic and limited as they were. These seven

hearings will provide a desperately needed venue for their voices and concerns to be heard in a public forum," state **Tara Zrinski, Lehigh Coordinator for Food & Water Watch.**

"Better decisions are made by government agencies when there is broad and diverse public input. The communities that PennEast aims to go through each have unique qualities, populations and assets that are threatened by the pipeline. DRBC is well aware of this diversity because of their decades of watershed work and so should understand and agree that 7 hearings are needed to take a deep dive into the impacts in order to accomplish a comprehensive project assessment," said **Tracy Carluccio, Deputy Director, Delaware Riverkeeper Network.**

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