

For Immediate Release

May 17, 2019

Press Statement From the Delaware River Frack Ban Coalition

Environmental Leaders Applaud Delaware River Governors For Leadership in Expanding and Advancing Frack Ban

The Delaware River Frack Ban Coalition, comprised of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, Catskill Mountainkeeper, Clean Water Action NJ, Damascus Citizens for Sustainability, Delaware Sierra Club, Environment New Jersey, Food and Water Watch, Natural Resources Defense Council and New Jersey Sierra Club is applauding the Governors of the Delaware River Watershed for their leadership in expanding proposed frack ban protections for the Delaware River Watershed, and for enacting a complete and total ban to protect the region's water resources.

It was a historic moment when, on May 16 at the Delaware River Governors Leadership Summit New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy's strong statement that protection of the Delaware River mandates that the 4 watershed Governors, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York and Delaware, stand together to ban fracking, including the treatment, storage and disposal of its wastewater, and water withdrawals for fracking, throughout the Delaware River Watershed was quickly echoed and applauded by Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf and Delaware Governor John Carney.

While New York Governor Andrew Cuomo was unable to attend the event because he was announcing another pivotal decision worthy of praise and applause – denial of the NESE pipeline that would have run through New York and New Jersey carrying Pennsylvania fracked shale gas – we look forward to him joining with his fellow watershed Governors in supporting and quickly advancing the full ban on fracking, frack wastewater and water withdrawals for fracking. Governor Cuomo has been historically strong on this issue; we expect that strength will continue.

The Governors' bold stance to protect the Delaware River watershed by advancing a complete ban on fracking, the importation of toxic frack wastewater, and the exportation of frack drilling water, will protect the water resources of the Delaware River for the millions that rely upon our watershed for drinking water, recreation, economic prosperity and healthy ecosystems, and will help in the international effort to protect present and future generations from the devastating ravages of climate change.

The Coalition urges the Governors to ensure the ban is enacted as soon as possible by a vote of the Commissioners of the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC).

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 for drilling, fracking, or related activities 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 the allowance of frack wastewater discharges and the withdrawal of fresh water for fracking, as instructed by a resolution passed by the DRBC Commissioners at their September 13 public business meeting. The draft regulations were required to be issued by Nov. 30.

A public comment period on the draft regulations ended March 31, 2018, and attracted more than 40,000 comments—the majority of which called for the Commission to enact a complete ban on fracking and its related activities throughout the Delaware River Watershed. 104,000 petitions were submitted to the Governors calling for a complete ban on fracking and its related activities in December 2018. The DRBC is now deliberating on how to proceed.

Since 2010, scientific analyses, public health statistics, peer-reviewed studies, and government records show that the impacts of gas and oil development significantly harm the environment including our water, air, habitats and communities' health, despite regulatory controls. The experience of communities where fracking is occurring are the proliferation of adverse health impacts due to gas drilling and fracking operations and its inherent air and water pollution. The overwhelming weight of the evidence shows that shale gas cannot be extracted or developed safely, making this the right time to enact a Watershed ban on all gas development.

The five voting members of the DRBC – the Commissioners - are the Governors of the four states whose tributaries flow to the Delaware - Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey and Delaware – and the Army Corps of Engineers, representing the federal government. As an autonomous agency formed under federal law to manage the shared waters of the Basin, the Commission members are responsible for protecting the drinking water supplies of more than 15 million people, including New York City and Philadelphia, and the federally designated Wild and Scenic Delaware River.

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