

# You could make 2022 a tipping-point year

## Pennsylvania is a fulcrum; let's use it to move the world

Damascus Citizens for Sustainability was founded with the aim of keeping fracking out of the Delaware River Basin, our immediate backyard. We got a ban in the basin this year. But with climate change wreaking planet-wide destruction, we have not wanted to hide in our own little neck of the woods. The fossil fuel juggernaut must be stopped everywhere.

Aware of that since the beginning, we've expanded our outreach throughout the years not only to the entire Marcellus region, but around the globe. And one area in we have become most intimately involved could prove to have the leverage to move the whole world: Pennsylvania.

**PA is a fulcrum because it is the second biggest producer of natural gas in the U.S., and unlike Texas—the first biggest—it is a political swing state. That means:**

- It has a big enough contingent of environmentally minded voters that there is a real chance for those voters to swing elections within the state.
- On a national level, politicians from both parties looking to secure the U.S. Presidency, Senate and House will bend over backward to appease the people of Pennsylvania, out of all proportion to the size of its population.
- Therefore, if PA policies shift toward phasing down natural gas, it will have an immense impact on national policies regarding fossil fuels—and from thence, the power to influence the globe.

**With 2022 being an election year, what happens to public sentiment in PA now could have irreversible consequences, for good or ill, for the fate of the planet.**

**There's good reason to believe that we can succeed in shifting sentiment decisively enough to have an impact on policy decisions.** Indeed, recent polls suggest that, following over a decade of awareness-raising by DCS and its allies, the public in PA is awakening to the dangers of fracking.

- A 2020 CBS/YouGov poll showed more Pennsylvanians opposing fracking (52%) than supporting it (48%).
- Also in 2020, A Franklin & Marshall poll of registered Pennsylvania voters found 48% supported a ban on fracking, while 39% opposed it.
- And this year, a Data for Progress poll showed PA residents favoring stronger regulation of fracking by significant margins; for instance, 61% agreed with the statement that PA “needs to do a better job of cracking down on fracking companies that do not comply with regulations,” compared to only 30% saying government shouldn't intervene.

**Here are a few of the fronts on which DCS will work to keep this momentum going:**

- Continued support for the **PA Attorney General's ongoing investigation into environmental crimes related to fracking.** We helped get this investigation off the ground in the first place by working—for years before the formal announcement—connecting damaged households with whom we work with the AG's office. We will continue providing help to households having trouble fighting their way past hostile local officials to get a referral to the AG's office, as well as giving information directly to that office.
- **Connecting frontline households who can provide testimony with other legal actions,** such as Grant Township's fight to keep an injection well out of its backyard.
- **Connecting political representatives with individual constituents who can testify to the impacts the fossil fuel industry is having on them,** and otherwise educating those representatives and their staffs about the consequences of industry activities.

- Hammering home **the dangers of radioactivity** associated with drilling waste—something on which we have already had a significant impact as a major source of information and contacts for investigative journalist Justin Nobel of **Rolling Stone**, who woke up America with his article “America’s Radioactive Secret” and is following up with more articles, webinar appearances and a book.
- Making sure that everyone around the state knows that **road-spreading of drilling waste (aka brine) on roads is distributing toxins all around the state**, not just in fence-line communities—and that although it supposedly stopped, it has in fact continued via sly provisions allowing for companies to self-certify their brine as a “beneficial use” co-product.
- Raising public awareness that the disposal of **drill cuttings in landfills and leachate transferred from those landfills to municipal waste disposal facilities is also contaminating neighborhoods around the state**, not just near drilling areas.
- Educating the public about **the impossibility of removing toxins (e.g. radioactivity) from this waste**, and about the fact that it is being **discharged from “treatment” facilities into rivers with downstream drinking water uptakes**, with devastating impacts on human health, wildlife and agriculture.
- Publicizing the true economics of fossil fuel use: **measure the dollar costs in health, environmental cleanup and climate change** and fossil fuels are the most expensive, not the cheapest, energy alternative.

## And the Other Delaware River Basin States?

If Pennsylvania is a fulcrum, what should we push for in the other Basin states—New York, New Jersey, and Delaware—to move goals forward?

**The ‘other’ Basin states are users and even exporters of natural gas. We are exploring:**

- What are the opportunities to reduce the use of gas in the various states?
- What can be done to facilitate greater energy efficiency in housing, both private and commercial?
- How can we advance educating the public about the impacts of fossil fuels used in transportation and heating/cooling?
- How to facilitate the growth and usage of renewable energy so there is diminishment of fossil fuel usage?
- How to halt the Gibbstown, New Jersey, LNG (liquefied natural gas) export terminal and it’s associated Wyalusing compression facility? DCS is working with a tight-knit coalition on this.

**New York imports both drill cuttings and liquid waste from gas and oil wells in PA—with all the air, and water impacts. There is not proper monitoring of radioactivity or other toxic impacts that can go into the air and water.**

- Where is the leachate from these landfills going? We want to further educate those living near or downstream from these facilities. Do the workers understand the risks they are exposed to?
- New York has passed the change to re-evaluate the oil and gas drilling wastes as the hazardous —NOT “SPECIAL”—wastes that they are, but has not put in place appropriate DEC (NY regulatory) rules to govern the movement, and possible disposal of the waste.

**The DRBC (Delaware RiverBasin Commission) has opened a comment period on its proposed regulations to allow import of oil gas waste into the Delaware River Basin and export of water for fracking outside of the Delaware Basin.**

- Thousands of comments have to be submitted and WILL be, but lots of work must be done to make this happen before the end of the comment time, February 28, 2022. The waste is full of hazardous toxic components and is highly radioactive!