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Standing in Defense of the Delaware River Watershed *Organizations Vow: Attacks to be Rebuffed by Pledge to Resist*

Delaware River Watershed - Organizations announced that they are rallying to protect the Delaware River Watershed against all attackers of its communities and environment. The groups, many of whom are in the long-running Delaware River Frack Ban and Climate Action Coalition, have vowed – through the adoption of a [Pledge of Resistance and Protection](#) – to resist all hostile attempts to overtake the Delaware River Watershed. The Pledge is being signed by people who will take action as needed to carry it out.

According to the Coalition, recent moves by federal legislators have revealed an effort by fracking and other special interests to overturn the Delaware River Basin Commission’s ban on fracking. This would interfere with fair and equitable watershed governance and protection performed by the Commission.

Recent attempts at strong-arm tactics by federal government officials include a closed-door meeting between officials and pro-fracking interests in Wayne County, as well as a resolution from the federal representative to the DRBC to eliminate funding for DEI and climate initiatives, as detailed below:

Closed-door meeting between EPA Secretary Lee Zeldin, Representative Bresnahan and pro-fracking interests in Wayne County:

In March, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lee Zeldin traveled to the Upper Delaware to meet with Representative Bresnahan and, according to a [news account](#), “local pro-fracking industry figures, advocates and elected officials”. News articles reported that they talked about the need to develop the natural gas resources in the Delaware River Basin and unleash “energy dominance”. Congressman Bresnahan’s office issued a press release documenting the discussion and who attended the meeting. During a subsequent telephonic town hall, Representative Bresnahan doubled down, saying he expected support from the EPA to “...help get our gas rights back...” and to capitalize “...on energy under our feet” and “...natural gas extraction.” He also

stated, "I'm committed to reigning in bureaucratic groups like the DRBC." The DRBC was not invited and did not attend the meeting.

"The misuse of power demonstrated by Congressman Bresnahan, EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin and others in the federal administration to interfere with the authority and independence of the DRBC, and to do so in a way that strips states of their equitable power to protect the River essential to all of our lives, is reprehensible. But we the people of the Delaware River watershed will use our democratic and constitutional rights to defend our River and region. We will not be intimidated into silence or acquiescence," **said Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper and leader of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network.**

Resolution from the federal representative to the DRBC to eliminate DEI and climate:

At their June 11 business meeting, DRBC unanimously adopted a resolution put forward by the Army Corps of Engineers who represents the federal government on the Commission that, "...the Commission must not use federal funds awarded through the Corps to support policies or programs that advance the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion' or the concept of 'climate change'".

According to the Coalition, the Pledge of Resistance and Protection pushes back against these strong-arm tactics attempting to force people living in the Delaware River Basin to accept the Trump Administration's political agenda pushing fossil fuels, specifically fracked gas, feigning an "energy emergency", and denying the need for diversity, equity and inclusion in the Watershed's communities, and prohibiting the recognition of the climate crisis. Organizations have sent letters [to the DRBC Commissioners](#) and [to Congressman Bresnahan](#), objecting to these actions and pledging support for the DRBC as they defend the ban on fracking and resist a senseless, hostile, and wasteful dissection of their agency.

Federal legislation:

Legislation ([HR3428](#)) introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by freshman Congressman Rob Bresnahan (PA-08) to probe the Delaware River Basin Commission and 2 other Compact Commissions. The bill orders a review by the U.S. Comptroller General of the Commissions' funding, duties, policies and practices.

"This attempt to poke around the DRBC's inner workings is nothing more than a politically motivated witch hunt, designed to intimidate and disrupt the DRBC, and is a waste of taxpayer money and agency resources," **said Tracy Carluccio, Deputy Director of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network.**

B. Arrindell, Director of Damascus Citizens for Sustainability stated, “Just as New York declared a ban of high volume hydraulic fracturing (or fracking), because of health concerns related to fracking, and the DRBC about 6 years later also banned fracking in the Delaware Basin out of concern about damage to the resources DRBC exists to protect, we assure everyone that nothing has changed - fracking processes are still causing human and environmental health damages as detailed in the 9th edition of the [Compendium](#) and many media and personal accounts. That Mr. Bresnahan and other special interests are making efforts to overturn the DRBC’s ban on fracking reflects their support of those special interests and not the interests of the people who call the Delaware Basin home now and in the future. The DRBC has done their job keeping the water clean and providing equitable watershed governance and must not be interfered with out of short-term monetary desires that will sacrifice our long-term health protections”.

The PLEDGE:

The Coalition has launched the [Pledge to Defend](#) the Delaware River Watershed from fracking. The [Pledge](#) will be signed by individuals, stating “I Take This Pledge of Resistance and Protection...in solidarity to uphold the ban on high volume hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) and to resist all the harmful activities that fossil gas/oil development brings.”

A permanent ban prohibiting fracking in the Delaware River Watershed was adopted by the DRBC in February 2021 following a moratorium on gas drilling instituted in 2010 and after more than ten years of comprehensive research and public deliberation. Groups are bringing the Pledge in person to street events and markets, online to members and through social media to invite people to take a stand for the Watershed.

Representatives of organizations point out that a “take over” of the DRBC would not be a simple matter. The agency was founded in 1961, resulting from a Supreme Court Decree that formed an intergovernmental Compact. The Watershed states each adopted statutes to institute the very powerful Commission, and the DRBC has its own Rules of Practice and Procedure, regulations, and Comprehensive Plan, developed over the past six decades. The federal member on the Commission, the Army Corps of Engineers, is only one vote, with the 4 watershed states - New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware - comprising the voting majority. The establishment of an agency dedicated to a watershed-based approach to planning, management, and protection of the environment was and still is groundbreaking and set in motion decades of action benefitting the waters that the states share.

"Before the DRBC was created, the Delaware River Basin was a management boondoggle of about 43 state agencies, 14 interstate agencies, and 19 federal agencies

all trying to wade through the needs of the Basin with their various expertise, tools, and powers. The need for a more organized body was showing. The DRBC was created not as a power grab attempt, but as a mutual understanding between the 4 states and the federal government that a centralized decision-making body would only be of benefit to the Basin and its communities. As President Kennedy said during the signing of the Delaware River Basin Compact "The task set for the Commission will not be easy to achieve, but we are confident that the cooperation that has brought forth this Compact will endure, and that working together real progress can be made for the people of the Basin", **said Karen Feridun, Founder, Berks Gas Truth.**

Up to 17 million people rely on the Delaware River for water every day, including New York City, metropolitan Philadelphia, and millions in rural areas. Water supplies contribute \$3.82 billion in annual value to the regional economy and water quality brings \$2.5M in annual economic benefit to the Basin, according to a study out of the University of Delaware. [1] The Delaware River is the longest free-flowing river east of the Mississippi and was the second river to be designated as a Wild and Scenic River by the U.S. Congress.

"Low-income communities and communities of color experience and are likely to continue experiencing the consequences of fracking first and worse than other communities, which is why Catskill Mountainkeeper stands with our allies in supporting the DRBC's ban on fracking in the Delaware River Watershed. Not only are we protecting precious drinking water and natural resources, we are also rallying behind communities to protect their right to a clean and healthy environment," **said Taylor Jaffe, Catskill Mountainkeeper's Program Manager.**

The Coalition points out that people have worked and communities have strived for years upon years to protect and defend the Delaware River Watershed and improve it where needed. These investments are not easily taken away and certainly won't be surrendered by the public and those who have pledged to resist putting any of these values in jeopardy.

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[1] Gerald J. Kauffman, Socioeconomic Value of the Delaware River Basin in Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania", University of Delaware, 10.11.11, p. 26.