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Dear Commissioners,

Please ban cracking in Pennsylvania. We must find other energy solutions before it's too late.

In a press event at COP23, Robert Howarth, the David R. Atkinson Professor of Ecology at Cornell University said, "Methane is an important greenhouse gas and is currently responsible for an amount of global warming equal to approximately 60% of that caused by carbon dioxide. Methane reductions offer one of the few available approaches to immediately slow the rate of global warming, since the climate responds more quickly to decreases in methane compared to carbon dioxide." A ban on fracking in the Delaware River Basin is an important step in limiting methane emissions, but allowing water withdrawals and the processing of fracking waste in the Basin will only enable more fracking and, therefore, more methane leaks outside of the basin. In fact, at the very same time that warming is posing risks to our water supply, the amount of water required for fracking is increasing. "Oil and natural gas fracking, on average, uses more than 28 times the water it did 15 years ago, gulping up to 9.6 million gallons of water per well." More clean water contaminated means more waste. Fracking was never a good idea, but, as the problems it helped create intensify, it has become such a bad idea that it must be stopped. The Delaware River Basin Commission must provide the protections the Basin deserves and vote in favor of a full ban on fracking, water extraction, and fracking waste processing.

When a site is developed for gas well development, the change is dramatic, essentially transforming the land to an industrial landscape. The result is destruction of acres of vegetation (8.8 acres per well pad in 2011 with 30 acres of forest impacts due to edge effects, more than double that is the trend today), soil compaction and destruction of the natural land contours, alterations to watershed drainage patterns, and hydrologically connected systems such as wetlands and vernal pools. Habitats and complex ecosystems are disrupted or lost. 85% of the Upper Delaware where the Marcellus Shale is located is forested. Forest destruction and fragmentation in turn destroys the ability of the forest ecosystem to capture, clean, and infiltrate precipitation, removes the trees that sequester carbon, reduces biodiversity, encourages invasive species, and destroys vital habitat.

On March 13, leading scientists and physicians released the Compendium of Scientific, Medical, and Media Findings Demonstrating Risks and Harms of Fracking, 5th Edition documenting fracking's harm to public health. Please read all of the study's findings. Their conclusion, and mine, is that the only way to truly protect public health is to prohibit fracking and all its associated activities (waste hauling, treatment, disposal). I urge you to ban all of these activities in your final regulations.

Sincerely,

Pat Porter