

Michael Lombardi

There is a moratorium on all gas drilling, hydraulic fracturing (fracking), water withdrawals for and wastewater treatment and discharges from fracking throughout the entire Delaware River Basin today, since 2010.

The moratorium was put in place by the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC), the federal-interstate agency that manages the water resources of the Delaware River Watershed. The DRBC members – the Governors of Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and Delaware, and the federal government – have the responsibility of protecting the shared waters that provide 15-17 million people in all four of the Watershed states with drinking water, including New York City and Philadelphia.

The Delaware River was designated as a national Wild and Scenic River by Congress because of its outstanding features, irreplaceable resources, exceptional water quality and scenic and recreational value. These prized assets provide important economic benefit to all four states whose tributaries flow to the Delaware River. These values are gravely jeopardized by fracking and its polluting operations and must be protected for the public and future generations.

The entire nontidal Delaware River is protected by DRBC's Special Protection Waters regulations that do not allow water quality to be diminished in any way. We are dependent on that protection to keep our water safe.

After exhaustive study, the State of New York prohibited fracking based on environmental and public health analysis. The NY Department of Health concluded that the overall weight of the evidence demonstrated the likelihood that adverse health outcomes and environmental impacts from fracking could not be prevented, leading to the Governor's decision to ban high volume hydraulic fracturing in the state.¹ The State of Maryland permanently banned fracking after 2 years of study, based on the potential for adverse public health and environmental impacts.²

The natural gas industry has received unprecedented exemptions from our nation's most important environmental and public health laws, including the Safe Drinking Water Act, Clean Air Act, and the Clean Water Act.³

Hydraulic Fracturing (Fracking) Harms

There is significant evidence that natural gas development, and its related operations, which include all the phases of the hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") process, from the first stage of industrial land preparation; to the storage, handling, and use of chemicals and additives for extraction and stimulation; to drilling and fracking; to the withdrawal of and degradation of large volumes of water and its discharge and disposal as waste, has substantial adverse effects on public health, property interests, agriculture, and on our air, water, and land.⁴

The most recent statistical analysis of the body of scientific literature by the Concerned Health Professionals of New York and Physicians for Social Responsibility, 685 peer-reviewed papers examining gas drilling and/or hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") were reviewed and the overwhelming majority of studies found evidence of or potential adverse impacts on water, air, and human health.⁵

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) has determined that there are 301 cases of private water well contamination caused by oil and gas operations in the Commonwealth⁶; over 4,400 water complaints related to oil and gas have been filed by the public with PADEP. Between 2004 and 11.2016, PADEP lists 9,443 public complaints about environmental problems in shale gas drilling areas.⁷

