

RE: CALL FOR DRBC TO MAINTAIN FRACKING BAN **3/12/2025**
TO: Members of Delaware River Basin Commission

My name is Kathleen Nolan, and I am submitting this comment as a physician, researcher, and author and editor of the *Compendium of Scientific, Medical, and Media Findings Demonstrating Risks and Harms of Fracking and Associated Gas and Oil Infrastructure* and on behalf of myself, Catskill Mountainkeeper, Concerned Health Professionals of New York, and the New York State chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility. I urge your continued full support of a ban on fracking in the Delaware River Basin.

The Commission has wisely banned fracking in the Basin, based on its mission: “to manage, protect, and improve the water resources of the Delaware River Basin, with the goal of ensuring an adequate and equitable supply of suitable quality water for users and the environment.” Moreover, since prohibiting fracking prevents local contaminations of air, water, and soil, the Basin’s ban on fracking eliminates a major potential source of acute and chronic illness related to toxic exposures of residents and visitors.

Over 2,000 research studies demonstrate adverse human health impacts from fracking. These adverse health impacts relate to three main pathways of contamination: 1) leaks of toxins into the air from well sites and fracking infrastructure; 2) leaks of toxins into subsurface aquifers through induced fractures, cracked well bores, and fracking waste disposal; and 3) contamination from toxins during onsite “storage” or offsite transport and disposal of drilling and fracking waste. The magnitude of documented adverse health impacts reveals the magnitude of these contaminations. Over time, virtually every fracking well site leaks, and many leak from the very first day that they are drilled. Fracking can also cause earthquakes, which dramatically increase the chances of leakage. Because toxic materials and leakage are inherent to the nature of fracking activities, regulations may reduce but cannot eliminate these forms of contamination.

A natural experiment that illustrates what fracking means for an area has resulted from differences in fracking activity between northern Pennsylvania, where the practice became widespread beginning in 2008, and southwestern New York, where the practice was and remains banned. A team of researchers in 2023 found that in the southern tier of New York, trends for heart attack and heart failure continued downward in and following 2009, while in the northern tier of Pennsylvania, where fracking intensity increased, trends for the same conditions increased. While this study did not parse causal mechanisms, contamination of both air and water are implicated. A mission to protect water quality is incompatible with any fracking activity. I strongly urge you to keep the Basin protected from fracking-related water contaminations and threats to infrastructure, while also preventing ecological damage and adverse human health impacts, by keeping in place a basin-wide ban on fracking activities.

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