

Delaware River Basin Commission comments 3/12/2025
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Good morning. I'm Bart Schoenfeld. I'm a board certified cardiologist from New York State. I'm a board member of Physicians for Social Responsibility-New York and a member of Concerned Health Professionals of New York. I want to thank you for this public comment period.

I'm going to talk about fracking. For well over a decade, we at Concerned Health Professionals have documented the risks and harms of fracking and associated gas infrastructure. Our latest report references over 2500 articles.

It was reported that drilling for natural gas in the Delaware River Basin was discussed at a roundtable last week with EPA commissioner Lee Zeldin. Fracking in the Delaware River Basin was sensibly prohibited in 2021, with attention to the grave health, pollution, and environmental impacts associated with the practice.

I'd like to take this time to review a recent article about the health effects of fracking in Pennsylvania, one of the DRBC states. It was published in the Lancet, a world recognized medical journal.

As background, I'd like to note that many studies have documented high levels of noxious and carcinogenic chemicals including benzene and polycyclic aromatic compounds downwind of fracking sites. Fracking has been associated with increased risks of heart attack, heart failure, and asthma, as well as adverse birth outcomes.

Fracking in Pennsylvania began in the early 2000's, and the authors of this article looked at Medicare claims from 2002 to 2015 from Pennsylvania counties bordering NY, and compared them to claims from bordering counties in New York State during the same time period, where fracking had been banned. They looked at 5 health outcomes: heart attack, COPD and bronchiectasis, congestive heart failure, ischemic heart disease, and stroke.

What they found was not surprising. Fracking had a strong association with increased hospitalization for heart attack relative to neighboring regions in NY where fracking was banned. There were also strong associations with heart failure and ischemic heart disease.

I'd like to quote from the article: "Our study indicates that impacts on local population health should be a high priority in the management of existing

wells and a key factor in consideration of future unconventional natural gas development.”

I want to emphasize that this study looks at only a few health effects, and I encourage you to take a look at our Compendium.

In conclusion, I remind you that although there may be a short term economic benefit to fracking, it's not worth the impact on our health.