

# Protecting Communities and Special Places

e-Newsletter July 19, 2013



**"No amount of private or corporate economic gain is worth jeopardizing clean drinking water or Pennsylvania's natural heritage."**

*~ Pocono Record Editorial Staff*

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## No Bridge Over These Troubled Waters

While some citizens in Pennsylvania might welcome the release of their oil and gas leases, the recent announcement of lease terminations by two energy companies was not welcome news to landowners in Wayne County, Pa.

The industry pull-out comes after a series of complaint letters sent to the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) by several Pennsylvania legislators, including Governor Corbett, and the Northern Wayne Property Owners Alliance, a landowners association. All urged the DRBC to lift its current moratorium on drilling; the landowners association threatened legal action if the DRBC does not act soon.

Perhaps those letter-writers should read the Pocono Record editorial reprinted below before criticizing the DRBC for its careful consideration of the impacts of hydraulic fracturing on the waters it is charged to manage and protect.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Keep It Wild Hike!

**JULY 28, 10 a.m.**

(Please note that this is a date change from the previous announcement)

Hike the beautiful Sand Spring Trail in the Devil's Elbow Natural Area of the Loyalsock State Forest.

[Find more hike details here](#)

[Check it out on Facebook here](#)

*From the Pocono Record, July 7, 2013*

*The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania's public resources are the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come. As trustee of these resources, the Commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all the people.*

*Article I, Section 27, Pennsylvania Constitution*

*Gov. Tom Corbett is chastising the Delaware River Basin Commission for holding up gas drilling in northeastern Pennsylvania. He's worked up about landowners' rights and stalled economic growth, for which he blames the DRBC's three-year moratorium on natural gas drilling. But Corbett has other reasons to worry. His recently adopted budget starves Keystone State parks and public forests of tax revenue, instead calling for more than a third of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' \$300 million allocation to come from oil and gas royalties and past lease payments.*

*That makes not just Corbett, but the entire commonwealth, uncomfortably beholden to the drilling companies and puts undue pressure on commonly held natural resources.*

*Someone should remind the governor that Pennsylvania's Constitution calls for the protection of its clean air and water. Gas companies are having diverse and,*

Click the picture to download the flyer.

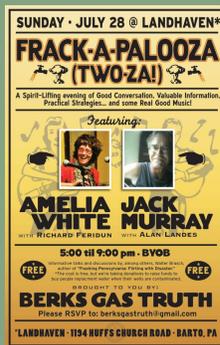
[www.keepitwildrda.org](http://www.keepitwildrda.org)

### Frack-A-Palooza (Two-Za!)

July 28, 5 to 9 p.m.

A spirit-lifting evening of good conversation, valuable information, practical strategies, and some real good music!

RSVP required to [berksgastruth@gmail.com](mailto:berksgastruth@gmail.com)



Click the picture for more information.

## TAKE ACTION!

### Clean Air Council Alert

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) is currently revising a policy on how the public participates in the permitting process. This is your chance to tell PA DEP what you think about their proposed policy changes and make your own suggestions.

Comments due on Monday, July 22 by 5

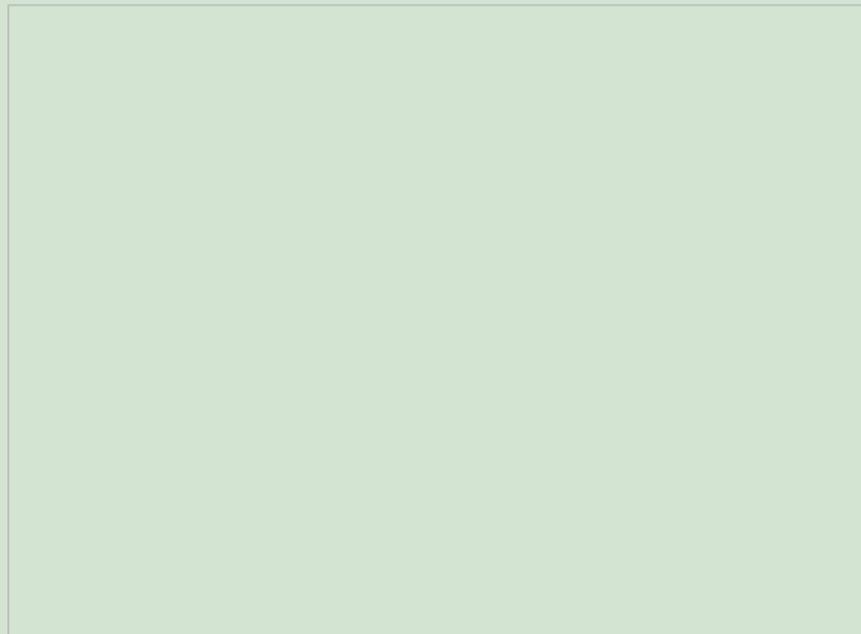
frequently, adverse impacts on both air and water as they extract natural gas from deep in the ground. So the four-state DRBC had good reason to impose the moratorium. The DRBC is in the process of creating rules to govern drilling activities with an eye to protecting both the Delaware and public health.

The Delaware River warrants protection not only for its "natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values" but as the source of drinking water for more than 15 million people, including Philadelphia and New York City residents.

Corbett's reliance on drilling to support natural resource protection is ironic - outright contradictory. He's made public lands dependent upon their own exploitation. The governor's championing of private property rights ignores the risks drilling poses to neighbors and people downstream, whose rights are equally important.

Corbett's actions aren't surprising. He is deeply, personally beholden to the drilling industry. As a candidate for state attorney general and then for governor, he accepted well over \$1 million in contributions.

The DRBC is right to move cautiously on whether or how to allow gas drilling in the river basin. No amount of private or corporate economic gain is worth jeopardizing clean drinking water or Pennsylvania's natural heritage.



Lake Wallenpaupack, popular with tourists, borders Pike and Wayne Counties. The lake's waters eventually find their way to the Delaware River.

IMAGE: ANN PINCA

### Delaware Riverkeeper

The Delaware Riverkeeper Network champions the rights of our communities to a Delaware River and tributary streams that are free-flowing, clean and healthy.

See what you can do to help.

### Shaking It Up

A recently published scientific study reveals that strong earthquakes in other parts of the world can trigger seismic activity in the United States in areas containing wastewater injection wells. These wells are used for the disposal of salty brine and soiled water generated from drilling activities.

Localized seismic activity caused by wastewater injection wells has been previously documented, but this additional trigger was not known until now.

p.m.

[Click here to take action](#)

## IN THE NEWS

Last week's Independence from Fracking event found environmental groups across the state [rallying for a moratorium on drilling](#) at Senators' offices in the Keystone State.

Despite poll results indicating [58% of Pennsylvanians are willing to support a drilling moratorium](#) and the recent [Pa. State Democratic Committee vote](#) also supporting a moratorium, most Democratic gubernatorial candidates [immediately distanced themselves](#) from the idea.

Perhaps those Pennsylvanians living next to the MarkWest gas processing plant would support a moratorium [after black smoke spewed from the plant last weekend, leaving visible soot marks on one neighbor's roof.](#)

Apparently, black smoke from the MarkWest plant isn't a rarity; watch this 2011 slideshow of a similar event.



MarkWest flaring - Marcellus air quality

Despite the passage of [SB 259](#), the royalty issues refuse to go away as frustrated landowners ponder [a class action suit](#) against Chesapeake Energy.

Meanwhile, [Governor Corbett defends the controversial pooling bill](#) he signed into law last week, while [Lycoming County Rep. Garth Everett struggles to recall](#) where

It should be a consideration as Pennsylvania continues to slowly add injection wells to its inventory. There are currently seven active oil and gas wastewater wells and four pending applications, according to a [State Impact report](#). Our western neighbor Ohio [hosts many more wastewater injection wells](#) and receives much of Pennsylvania's brine and drilling fluids for disposal.

In a separate [study on injection-induced earthquakes](#), seismologist [William L. Ellsworth](#) brings attention to the need for research concerning induced earthquakes. As Ellsworth concludes:

The petroleum industry needs clear requirements for operation, regulators must have a solid scientific basis for those requirements, and the public needs assurance that the regulations are sufficient and are being followed. The current regulatory frameworks for wastewater disposal wells were designed to protect potable water sources from contamination and do not address seismic safety.

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## Editorial: We Can No Longer Sweep the Emerging Water Crisis Under the Rug

Civil Society Institute and the  
American Clean Energy Agenda

Due to our current approach to energy, America's energy sector is barreling toward a train wreck where excessive cost, water scarcity, accelerated climate change, and human health converge to create one huge economic and ecological mess.

Rather than pursuing an "all-of-the-above energy strategy," as embodied in the Clean Energy Standard, it's more like we're pursuing the "anything-but strategy" - anything but what makes financial, public health and climate sense. What does make sense is a replacement strategy, systematically deploying (and improving along the way) our least risky resources - energy efficiency, renewables, storage, distributed power and demand response technologies - while greatly reducing reliance on or getting rid of high-risk options - coal, nuclear, and natural gas. These low-risk options are reliable, and very importantly, they do not guzzle enormous amounts of our ever-dwindling water resources.

The unifying theme here is water. Access to enough clean water is emerging as a critical national security issue, both domestically and abroad. We are squandering our most precious resource. Current usage patterns are simply unsustainable, and the electric power sector is the biggest problem when it comes to water. Thermoelectric plants (coal, nuclear, combined-cycle natural gas) and agriculture are our biggest users. The difference is that we have to grow food, but we don't have to continue to rely exclusively on water-intensive, central-station electric generating power plants anymore.

The coming water availability crisis is why the [Civil Society Institute](#) (CSI) and its grassroots allies - [The American Clean Energy Agenda](#) (ACEA) - are proposing that President Obama take immediate, decisive action through his executive powers to make water policy the top priority of energy policy for the United States. Through executive order, Mr. Obama could accelerate the completion of the on-going work of the [U.S. Geological Survey](#) (USGS) in collecting water use and availability data, engage the public in a meaningful dialogue with respect to the nature of the looming water crisis and solutions to those problems, and begin the process of eliminating water-intensive coal, nuclear and natural gas power plants in what the USGS has identified as our most threatened watersheds.

To that end, CSI and its allies have crafted and sent to the President for his consideration a [draft executive order](#) that establishes, among other things, technologically-based sustainability criteria for our electric grid and due diligence within the federal government of reaching them. It is also meant to jumpstart an

he got the idea to amend the bill in the first place.

*Listen to PA State Impact's Marie Cusick and Attorney Bob Burnett discuss the pooling issue on WITF's Radio Smart Talk [here](#).*

**Have You Been Keeping it Wild?**

[Sign the petition!](#)



**Join RDA**

We welcome your active participation and are in need of help for special events, publicity, research, and other projects. Contact us for details.

As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, RDA relies on donations for the important work we do. In order for RDA to continue its valuable education and advocacy outreach in 2013, please consider a tax-free contribution to our efforts.

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informed public discussion of the water issues we're facing and the best ways to address them.

We can no longer sweep the emerging water crisis under the rug and pretend that business as usual can continue without severe economic and human consequences for Americans. This speculative exploitation and use of coal, nuclear, natural gas and oil resources will no longer work in a warming world with constrained water resources. We must begin to plan for a transition to a truly sustainable electric grid with an eye toward preserving our precious water resources.

Mr. President, the ball's in your court. What are you going to do?

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