

Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments * Center for Biological Diversity *
Center for Environmental Health * Center for Health, Environment & Justice * Center for Media and Democracy *
Chesapeake Climate Action Network * Citizens Climate Lobby * Clean Water Network * DeSmogBlog *
Earth Day Network * Energy Action Coalition * Environment America * Environmental Health Fund *
Food & Water Watch * Friends of the Earth * Global Community Monitor * Greenpeace USA *
Health Care Without Harm * Healthy Building Network * International Center for Technology Assessment *
Labor Network for Sustainability * Oil Change International * Psychologists for Social Responsibility *
Public Citizen * Rainforest Action Network * Science & Environmental Health Network * 350.org *
All One Water * Casa Pueblo de Puerto Rico * Chatham Citizens for Effective Communities *
Citizens Against Titan * Citizens Campaign for the Environment * Citizens' Environmental Coalition *
Citizens for Water * Clean and Healthy New York * Climate Action Alliance of the Valley *
Climate Protection Campaign * Communities United for Rights and Environment *
Concerned Citizens of Portage County * Concerned Citizens of Ulysses * Damascus Citizens for Sustainability *
Delaware Riverkeeper Network * Empire State Consumer Project * Farmworker Association of Florida *
Free the Planet (University of Pittsburgh) * Gas Truth of Central Pennsylvania * Kids for Saving Earth *
KyotoUSA * La Paix Herb Farm * Los Jardines Institute * Louisiana Bucket Brigade *
Marcellus Outreach Butler * Maryland Pesticide Network * Nature Abounds * NC WARN *
New Jersey Highlands Coalition * NYH2O * Nueva York Contra el Gasoducto * Ohio Environmental Council *
Ohio Student Environmental Coalition * Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition *
Pittsburgh Councilman Douglas Shields * Save Maumee Grassroots Organization *
Sisters of St Francis of Philadelphia * Student Sierra Coalition (Ohio University) *
Tennessee Clean Water Network * UNCW-ECO * Upper Burrell Citizens Against Marcellus Pollution *
Vermont Public Interest Research Group

August 8, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of Americans who live in every US state and territory, we urge that you employ any legal means to put a halt to hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”), a highly controversial and dangerous method of “natural” gas exploration, until and unless the environmental and health impacts of this process are well understood and the public is adequately protected.

Fracking involves shooting millions of gallons of water laced with carcinogenic chemicals deep underground to break apart rock to release trapped gas. Despite its obvious hazards, regulation necessary to ensure that fracking does not endanger our nation’s water supply has not kept pace with its rapid and increasing use by the oil and gas industry.

To date, fracking has resulted in over 1,000 documented cases¹ of groundwater contamination across the county, either through the leaking of fracking fluids and methane into groundwater, or by above ground spills of contaminated and often radioactive wastewater from fracking

¹ <http://www.propublica.org/article/buried-secrets-is-natural-gas-drilling-endangering-us-water-supplies-1113>

operations. Rivers and lakes are also being contaminated with the release of insufficiently treated waste water recovered from fracking operations. In addition, fracking typically results in the release of significant quantities of methane – a potent greenhouse gas – into the atmosphere despite the availability of cost-effective containment measures.

We acknowledge the steps your administration has taken to address fracking. However, much more needs to be done. For example, EPA has convened an effort to study the impacts of fracking on drinking water. The first phase will end by 2012, but this study will take several years to complete. By this time, even more of the nation's drinking water may become contaminated by fracking. In addition, the EPA study will not include an analysis of the efficacy of the existing regulatory framework to address fracking impacts. And while Secretary Chu has assembled a committee to recommend and identify best practices to improve safety and environmental performance of fracking, best practices, assuming they are even implemented, can of course not in themselves provide adequate protection from risks that are not yet fully known.

Even if we fully understood all of the environmental and public health impacts of fracking, federal regulations do not currently manage, mitigate, and reduce these impacts. The lack of federal protections, combined with the current level and predicted increase of this activity, pose extreme and unnecessary risks to public health and the environment. We urge you to protect the public through the following actions:

- 1) Place a moratorium on issuance of federal permits required for fracking. Restrictions or moratoria of various types have been instituted in several US cities, the Province of Quebec, and the entirety of France and Australia. A moratorium should be placed on fracking in the United States until:
 - sufficient studies, including EPA's study of fracking impacts on groundwater resources, have been conducted to allow informed decisionmaking on the full environmental and health impacts of fracking
 - measures are put in place to minimize and fully mitigate any such impacts, including impacts to water quality, air quality, and global warming from unnecessary release of methane emissions
 - Section 322 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 is repealed to remove the exemption of hydraulic fracking from the Safe Drinking Water Act

- 2) Lead an open and honest public dialogue about the role of "natural" gas in our energy future. Touted as a "bridge fuel," it is a bridge to nowhere unless, in light of a full accounting of direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions as well as impact on water quality and supply, "natural" gas can be demonstrated to be better than other fossil fuels. Furthermore, as Fatih Birol, chief economist of the International Energy Agency warned recently, investments in "natural" gas will only delay the necessary transition away from fossil fuels and detract from important investments in efficiency as well as permanent energy sources like wind, solar, wave, and geothermal.

Mr. President, last March you said regarding fracking: "we've got to make sure that if we're

going to do it, we do it in a way that doesn't poison people.” Because it is poisoning people, we ask that you take the steps to stop it.

Sincerely,

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Secretary Steven Chu
Secretary Kenneth Salazar
Secretary Hillary Clinton