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 cases\(^1\) 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

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,

Barbara Sattler
President, Board of Directors
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments

Kieran Suckling
Executive Director
Center for Biological Diversity

Michael Green
Executive Director
Center for Environmental Health

Lois Gibbs
Executive Director
Center for Health, Environment & Justice

Lisa Graves
Executive Director
Center for Media and Democracy

Mike Tidwell
Director
Chesapeake Climate Action Network

Mark Reynolds
Executive Director
Citizens Climate Lobby

Natalie Roy
Executive Director
Clean Water Network

Kathleen Rogers
President
Earth Day Network

Courtney Hight
Executive Director
Energy Action Coalition

Margie Alt
Executive Director
Environment America

Judith Robinson
Associate Director
Environmental Health Fund

Wenonah Hauter
Executive Director
Food & Water Watch

Erich Pica
President
Friends of the Earth

Denny Larson
Executive Director
Global Community Monitor

Phil Radford
Executive Director
Greenpeace USA

Gary Cohen
President and Co-Founder
Health Care Without Harm

Bill Walsh
Executive Director
Healthy Building Network

Andrew Kimbrell
Executive Director
International Center for Technology Assessment
Joe Uehlein
Executive Director
Labor Network for Sustainability

Stephen Kretzmann
Director
Oil Change International

Luisa Saffiotti
President
Psychologists for Social Responsibility

Robert Weissman
President
Public Citizen

Rebecca Tarbotton
Executive Director
Rainforest Action Network

Carolyn Raffensperger
Executive Director
Science & Environmental Health Network

May Boeve
Executive Director
350.org

Arturo Massol-Deyá
Casa Pueblo de Puerto Rico

Gary Simpson
CCEC Board of Directors
Chatham Citizens for Effective Communities
North Carolina

Kayne Darrell
Citizens Against Titan
North Carolina

Adrienne Esposito
Executive Director
Citizens Campaign for the Environment

Barbara Warren
Executive Director
Citizens' Environmental Coalition

Joe Levine
Citizens for Water, and NYH20
New York City, NY

Kathleen A. Curtis
Executive Director
Clean and Healthy New York

Catherine C. Strickler
Founder and Chair
Climate Action Alliance of the Valley
Virginia

Ann Hancock
Executive Director
Climate Protection Campaign
California

Lori Babbey
Concerned Citizens of Portage County
Ohio

Michelle Bamberger
Concerned Citizens of Ulysses
New York

Barbara Arrindell
Damascus Citizens for Sustainability
Pennsylvania

Tracy Carluccio
Deputy Director
Delaware Riverkeeper Network

Brendan DeMelle
Executive Director
DeSmogBlog
Judy Braiman  
President  
Empire State Consumer Project  
New York

Tirso Moreno  
General Coordinator  
Farmworker Association of Florida

Eva Resnick-Day  
Free the Planet  
University of Pittsburgh

Benjamin Ketchum  
Gas Truth of Central Pennsylvania

Tessa Hill  
President  
Kids for Saving Earth  
Minnesota

Tom Kelly  
Director  
KyotoUSA

Myra Bonhage-Hale  
Steward  
La Paix Herb Farm  
West Virginia

Richard Moore  
Los Jardines Institute  
New Mexico

Anne Rolfes  
Founding Director  
Louisiana Bucket Brigade

Marcellus Outreach Butler  
Dianne Sipe  
Pennsylvania

Ruth Berlin  
Executive Director  
Maryland Pesticide Network

Jim Warren  
Executive Director  
NC WARN

Julia Somers  
Executive Director  
New Jersey Highlands Coalition

David Galarza  
Nueva York Contra el Gasoducto

Janet Keating  
Executive Director  
Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition  
West Virginia

Janina Klimas  
Ohio Student Environmental Coalition

Ellen Mee  
Director of Environmental Health Policy  
Ohio Environmental Council

Abigail Frost  
Founder  
Save Maumee Grassroots Organization  
Indiana

Nora. M. Nash  
Director, Corporate Social Responsibility  
Sisters of St Francis of Philadelphia

Camille Scott  
President  
Student Sierra Coalition  
Ohio University

Renee Victoria Hoyos  
Executive Director  
Tennessee Clean Water Network
Brinkley Hutchings  
Environmental Concerns Organization  
University of North Carolina Wilmington

Debra Borowiec  
Upper Burrell Citizens Against Marcellus Pollution  
Pennsylvania

Paul Burns  
Executive Director  
Vermont Public Interest Research Group

Melinda Hughes-Wert  
President  
Nature Abounds  
Pennsylvania

Dorothy Bassett  
All One Water  
Pennsylvania

Councilmember Douglas Shields  
Briget Shields  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Ken and Loretta Weir  
Founders  
Communities United for Rights and Environment  
Pennsylvania

Judy Pipher  
Seneca Falls NY

Joseph Mercurio  
New Kensington, PA

Arlene Mercurio  
New Kensington, PA

Gloria Krawczyk  
Jefferson Hills, PA

Rachel Reichert  
Jefferson Hills, PA

Bernie Eckley  
Jefferson Hills, PA

Kimberlie McEvoy  
Evans City, PA

Jeanne McMullen  
Pittsburgh, PA

cc:  
Administration Lisa P. Jackson  
Chairperson Nancy Sutley  
Secretary Steven Chu  
Secretary Kenneth Salazar  
Secretary Hillary Clinton