Fracking moratorium reinstated

Gov. Tom Wolf bans new drilling in state parks

Only days after Gov. Tom Wolf’s inauguration, PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center stood alongside the new governor in Pennsylvania’s Benjamin Rush State Park as he signed an executive order reinstating a moratorium against fracking in our state parks, and halting any further leases for drilling under state forestlands.

“Pennsylvanians from every walk of life love our state parks and forests and want them to be protected from fracking,” said Lina Blount, field associate with PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center. “Governor Wolf’s actions today help ensure that our state parks and forests receive the protection they deserve, so that future generations of Pennsylvanians can enjoy them.”

Pennsylvanians call for action

The issue of fracking on public lands came under widespread public scrutiny after former Gov. Tom Corbett rolled back the previously-existing moratorium against fracking in state parks and forests, and worked to make it easier to open other public lands to fracking.

In response to this and other attacks on our public lands, PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center moved quickly to recruit hundreds of Pennsylvanians to hearings and rallies against opening more state parks and forests to fracking. More than 25,000 concerned citizens called, wrote and emailed in opposition to Gov. Corbett’s attacks on our state parks and forests.

We also released a study showing the damage fracking will do to our parks—and the economic and recreational benefits of healthy, frack-free parks.

Protecting public lands

The public outcry helped convince Gov. Wolf to take swift action after his inauguration to protect our parks and forests.

“I know how important protected public lands are for wildlife, recreation, the environment and our economy,” noted Gov. Wolf. “As governor, I will continue to carry out the mandate of Pennsylvania’s Environmental Rights Amendment to protect, conserve and maintain our commonwealth’s public natural resources for all the people, including generations yet to come.”

PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center’s Elowyn Corby joined Gov. Tom Wolf during the governor’s news conference reinstating the moratorium on fracking in state parks.

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[Photo of Gov. Tom Wolf and Elowyn Corby at the news conference]

— Amy Stauffer/Flickr

Staff

“PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center’s Lina Blount (at podium) spoke at a rally against fracking in the state capital after Gov. Tom Wolf’s election.”

[Photo of Lina Blount at a rally]

— Staff

take action

Learn more about PennEnvironment’s efforts to fight fracking and take action with us at: www.PennEnvironment.org

PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center’s Lina Blount (at podium) spoke at a rally against fracking in the state capital after Gov. Tom Wolf’s election.
To our members

The past few months have brought some incredible victories for the environment, from President Obama’s vetoing of a bill forcing approval of the Keystone XL pipeline to four million people speaking out to save the bees.

Of course, we still have our work cut out for us. With a Congress that officially denied the science behind global warming and dirty energy companies that continue to pollute and threaten our environment, it’s more important than ever that we speak out for Pennsylvania’s air, water and open spaces.

Throughout the coming months, PennEnvironment will talk to people across the state, gather thousands of petitions and mobilize local support to protect our rivers and streams, reduce global warming pollution, and grow solar power in our communities.

It’s only through our members, like you, that we can do so. Thanks for making it all possible.

Sincerely,

David Masur
Executive Director

Recent action

New report: Storms worsening in Pennsylvania

A new PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center study showed that global warming’s negative effects are not only affecting Pennsylvania today, but will leave the next generation with a more dangerous climate.

The report, “Dangerous Inheritance,” examined data on temperature, rainfall and sea level over the past forty years. Not surprisingly, the study found that between the Baby Boomer and Millennial generations, significant differences in extreme weather patterns have already occurred. For example: Pennsylvania has seen a 20 percent increase in precipitation produced by the biggest storms hitting the state from 1970 to 2011.

“Millennials are already experiencing the stark impacts of climate change, from record heat to superstorms,” noted PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center’s Elowyn Corby. “But our generation can also make huge strides to reduce this pollution and avoid even more dangerous impacts in the future.”

Clean air forum highlights asthma risk in Pittsburgh

With the summer smog season just around the corner, Pittsburgh residents came out in droves to hear from PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center staff and local experts about the threat air pollution poses to the city and region.

Nearly 150 people attended a clean air forum held in the Shadyside neighborhood of Pittsburgh to see a presentation of air quality maps from Carnegie Mellon University that showed a neighborhood-by-neighborhood analysis of air pollution for the region. Attendees also heard from a local asthma specialist about how air pollution revealed in the maps could impact their health.

“With more than 100,000 Pittsburghers suffering from asthma and ongoing smog alert days in the region, it’s crucial that the Allegheny County Health Department start to rein in the worst sources of pollution as quickly as possible,” stated PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center’s Stephen Riccardi.

Toward a greener future

PennEnvironment and PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center gratefully accept bequests, beneficiary designations of IRAs and life insurance, and gifts of securities to support our work to build a cleaner, greener, healthier future.

For more information, call 1-800-841-7299 or send an email to: PlannedGiving@PennEnvironment.org.
Right after the Feb. 16 oil train explosion in West Virginia, the PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center and Frac-Tracker Alliance released a new study showing that more than 3.9 million Pennsylvanians live within the potential evacuation zone for a similar oil train accident in the commonwealth.

The report and interactive map, “Danger Around the Bend,” also comes on the heels of analyses from the U.S. Department of Transportation that predict that trains carrying crude oil or ethanol may derail an average of 10 times each year for the next two decades in the United States.

“Unbeknownst to residents, community leaders and first responders, these trains are rumbling through our neighborhoods, putting thousands of Pennsylvanians at risk for death, injury and destruction,” said David Masur, Executive Director for the PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center.

**Oil train accidents on the rise**

This type of crude oil is fracked from the Bakken formation in North Dakota, and then shipped via rail to points across the country. Bakken crude is more flammable than traditional crude, meaning it is extremely dangerous to transport via rail.

In the past few years, production of Bakken crude oil has skyrocketed, from a rate of 9,500 carloads in 2008 to nearly 500,000 in 2014—a fifteen-fold increase over the last six years. Predictably, this increase has led to more derailments and accidents involving oil trains, putting local communities at risk.

In the past two years, major oil train accidents have occurred in North Dakota, Virginia and Alabama, as well as the recent explosions in West Virginia and Galena, Ill. The worst of these was the town of Lac-Mégantic, in Canada’s Quebec Province. This catastrophic oil train explosion took place on July 6, 2013, killing 47 people and leveling half the town.

**Near-misses highlight risk to PA**

Pennsylvania has had three near-misses in the last two years alone—two in Philadelphia and one near Pittsburgh. In all three cases, trains carrying this highly volatile Bakken crude derailed in densely populated areas. Disaster was averted since these oil train accidents did not lead to explosions or fires.

Despite the threat these oil trains pose to Pennsylvania’s residents, the public is often times completely unaware that these trains are rumbling through their communities. This leaves the public and first responders woefully unprepared, should disaster strike. This issue, coupled with poor infrastructure and safety regulations, poses an extreme threat to residents.

“The disasters that have already happened throughout North America, the recent oil train explosion in West Virginia, and the near-misses here in Pennsylvania show that time is of the essence,” said Masur. “We need to act now to protect local residents and first responders from the growing threat of oil trains, and move toward a clean energy future.”

**Oil trains put 3.9 million in Pennsylvania at risk**

Since 2012, there have been eight major accidents and 250 safety incidents on Bakken Shale oil trains.

Over 3.9 million Pennsylvanians live in evacuation zones. To see where oil trains travel near your community, visit: www.PennEnvironment.org
As the Environmental Protection Agency works to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act that leave many of Pennsylvania’s streams vulnerable to pollution, some members of Congress are moving in the opposite direction, fast-tracking proposals to slow down, halt and dismantle protections for our waterways.

These rollbacks would prevent nearly 50,000 miles of Pennsylvania’s streams, and 2 million miles of waterways in total across the country from receiving full protection. And, disappointingly, Pennsylvania’s own Sen. Pat Toomey is leading the charge, backed by special interest lobbyists.

“Pennsylvanians of all stripes and from all walks of life spend the summer months enjoying our great rivers and streams,” said PennEnvironment Executive Director David Masur. “Not surprisingly, Pennsylvanians overwhelmingly want our politicians to be working for clean water, not working for the polluters.”

Congress attacks clean water protections

PennEnvironment has been working to protect Philadelphia’s Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers, Pittsburgh’s Three Rivers, and all of Pennsylvania’s waterways from pollution.

EPA Regional Administrator Shawn Garvin (left) and PennEnvironment’s Adam Garber (right) stand in support of the EPA’s Clean Water Rule.