



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aug. 12, 2021

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## **Protect Penn Trafford (PT), Penn Township Residents Call for DEP Public Hearing on Two Well Permits to Stop Fracking in Densely Populated Community**

**Penn Township** – Residents in Penn Township and Trafford Borough are calling on the Pa. Dept. of Environment Protection (DEP) to hold a public hearing on a proposal by Apex Energy to operate two fracking operations within 1 mile of 2,823 residents and Level Green Elementary School and within two miles of 12,733 residents.

Apex Energy, an Appalachian Basin-based company with a focus on unconventional horizontal well development, is proposing to put seven new fracking sites in Penn Township with one currently producing. The two unconventional wells, (known as 129-29114 Drakulic 7H and 129-29115 Drakulic 1H), would be located at 1059 First Street Trafford about 900 feet from Route 130 in the Village of Level Green, close to residents, posing health and safety threats to families, residents say. (Figure 1)

Westmoreland County is in the crosshairs of fracking industry activity. 45 wells are permitted on eight well sites with another 10 wells drilled or being developed in Westmoreland County. Based on the Pa. Attorney General Josh Shapiro's Grand Jury Investigation and medical research on the health impacts of residents living close to fracking operations, the location of the Drakulic well pad poses serious risks. Residents are also questioning the safety of a half-mile evacuation zone that would include the densely-populated housing plans in Level Green and Trafford including 918 residents identified as residing in an [Environmental Justice](#) area.

In addition to fracking concerns, residents would be breathing toxic, carcinogenic air pollution. The waste that is produced from fracking operations have proven to be radioactive and would endanger not only residents nearby but workers. Winds from U.S. Steel Clairton and Braddock plants also blow directly towards Trafford when they come from the southwest; the area is also in the Turtle Creek Valley, which traps pollution when it occurs along the major rivers. "When the Township allowed over 50 percent of the land in Penn Township to be available for oil and gas development, I think they saw dollar signs instead of listening to the will of the people who testified that unconventional natural gas development would harm our community," said Gillian Graber, executive director of Protect PT and a Trafford resident. "We will not back down from protecting our community."

While the two permits were only filed with the DEP this month, this is the second time that Apex has applied for general permits to operate a fracking well on the Drakulic site. The first permits

were filed in August, 2014. They expired, in part, due to a court challenge that was scheduled to be heard in October, 2021.

Protect PT organized as a community advocacy organization in December 2014 to fight the permits, raising considerable funds to mount a legal challenge to stop the fracking plans. After being approved at the local level and by the PA DEP, Protect PT appealed to the Pa. Environmental Hearing Board. The permit challenge was identified as EHB Docket No. 2018-080-R, Protect PT v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Environmental Protection and Apex Energy (Pa) LLC, Permittee. That challenge was dismissed this month when Apex withdrew the permits and resubmitted new permits making Protect PT's challenge to the current permits moot only months before trial was scheduled to begin.

A new public comment period at the DEP is now in effect. The DEP is not required to hold a public hearing, despite the close proximity of the well pads to the community, said Lauren Fraley, spokesperson for the DEP.

"The PA DEP needs to hear the voices of people who live so close to this development," adds Graber. "This fracking operation will directly impact thousands of people. There are also 96 privately owned water supplies identified within a half mile that will put local drinking water at risk."

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