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May 6, 2021

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Environmental Groups Raise Red Flag on Inadequate Oversight of the Transportation of Toxic Waste on the Region's Three Rivers

An environmental coalition of groups from Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia have raised concerns about the inadequate oversight regarding the transport of toxic waste on barges on the Monongahela, Allegheny and Ohio Rivers and the threat it poses to the potential contamination of our drinking water.

Guttman Realty, Bulk Terminal Services, has filed for permits to locate a fracking waste barge facility in Belle Vernon, Westmoreland County, the latest example of the threat our region faces from toxic waste contamination.

"Our Three Rivers are going to become the grand speedway of fracking waste," says Gillian Graber, executive director of Protect PT. "All three of our major waterways could be impacted by a spill or release of fluids. Spills are scary, but the build-up of small releases is also a major concern."

Ever since the Marcellus and Utica gas boom came to our region, the industry has sought to transport the toxic waste of the fracking operation throughout the region on our rivers, highways, rail and local roads. To date, this dangerous wastewater has generally been transported throughout the Ohio River Valley via heavy-duty tanker trucks, which clog local traffic and wear down small-town roads.

Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia residents are all faced with the threat of radioactive contaminants from the fracking waste. Fracking wastewater can contain a mixture of toxic chemical additives, heavy metals and radioactive particles. Radium-226 and radium-228, both

found in brine waste, are known carcinogens and can lead to bone, liver and breast cancer at high concentrations, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Secret, proprietary chemicals in fracking waste are also known to be extremely hazardous to people and aquatic life.

“Ohio has become the de facto dumping ground for fracking wastewater produced in the Ohio River Valley, thanks to the state’s loose injection regulation,” says Ben Hunkler, an organizer with Concerned Ohio River Residents (CORR). “[Nearly half](#) of the 38 million barrels of toxic waste injected into Ohio’s 226 disposal wells in 2017 was exported from West Virginia and Pennsylvania, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

“Barging wastewater along the Ohio River could subject even more Ohio communities to the noxious air emissions and groundwater contamination common near waste injection wells,” Hunkler says.

This process is a huge failure of regulatory oversight,” says Yuri Gorby, Freshwater Accountability Project. “This waste is currently only regulated as a hazardous material when it’s on the barge. When it comes into Ohio and West Virginia to be processed or sent to disposal wells, it is not classified as a hazardous waste. People in our region will pay the price in the form of unnecessary exposures to radioactive materials.”