

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sarah Martik, Center for Coalfield Justice
smartik@coalfieldjustice.org; (724) 986-6765
Diane Sipe, Marcellus Outreach Butler
sipediane5@gmail.com, 724-272-4539

More Than 55 Environmental Organizations Raise a Red Flag (And Paddle) On Public Health Impacts of the Petrochemical Industry Build-Out in the Region

Environmental organizations in the Ohio River Valley and beyond joined forces today in opposition to the proposed Appalachian Petrochemical Projects, which includes the Shell petrochemical plant in Beaver County, the planned petrochemical plant in Belmont County, Ohio, and the planned Appalachian Storage Hub in Ohio and West Virginia.

The timing of the “Paddle Against Petro” protest and the onshore rally was orchestrated to send a clear message to executives attending the Northeast U.S. Petrochemical Construction Conference & Exhibition, which has drawn top industry executives to the David L. Lawrence Convention Center this week.

“The growth and expansion of the petrochemical industry in three states brings with it a supporting web of highly polluting auxiliary industries and will decimate our air and water quality,” said Terrie Baumgardner of Beaver County Marcellus Awareness Community. “This industry will adversely impact the health of thousands of residents and communities in 50 counties in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia and turn up the dial on Climate Change. And for what? To create plastic products that will forever live in landfills and pollute our oceans.”

The rally and “kayaction” event took place in front of the Convention Center on the Three Rivers Heritage Trail and Allegheny River at 10 a.m. on July 18, 2018. The protest included a press conference, public rally, speakers from three states and banner raising on the Allegheny River.

Organizations and individuals from West Virginia and Ohio joined the Paddle Against Petro event and expressed their concerns during the rally.

“We demand better alternatives for our region than a massive, three-state petrochemical hub,” said Jill Hunkler of Belmont County, Ohio. “Residents of southeastern Ohio are already suffering from a massive fracking invasion. There have been explosions at well sites, contamination of our reservoirs, air pollution and so much more. The proposed ethane cracker plant for Belmont county will only increase our suffering and contribute drastically to the polluting of our air and water putting all of us at risk.”

“Industry markets this as a mega-petrochemical hub game-changer for our states,” said Dustin White, project coordinator for Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (OVEC) and resident of Charleston, WV. “In reality, this is a deadly game where out-of-state companies profit while the rest of us lose a chance at a healthier, more sustainable future.

“When it comes to the health and economy of our region, coal companies dug the graves, fracking companies built the casket and now petrochemical companies want to put the nails in the lid,” White added. “We deserve better than a continued legacy as a resource colony where workers and communities have to sacrifice themselves for profit.”

“The fact that multiple environmental organizations from many states have come together to stand in solidarity against the petrochemical industry is significant,” said Matt Mehalik, executive director of the Breathe Project. “We believe momentum is building to begin to implement sustainable solutions for our economy such as clean energy and clean technologies that will not harm our air, water and public health.”

As part of the rally and protest, organizations in multiple states have signed on in solidarity to a letter that outlines opposition to the Appalachian Petrochemical Projects. Please see the letter attached. The letter will go out to all elected local, state and federal leaders in Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia.

Organizations Standing (and Paddling) Together in Protest:

198 Methods

**Allegheny County Clean Air Now
Allegheny Defense Project
Aquashocola/Pohopoco Watershed Conservancy
Beaver County Marcellus Awareness Community
Berks Gas Truth
Better Path Coalition
Beyond Extreme Energy
Breathe Easy Susquehanna County
Breathe Project
Buckeye Environmental Network
Bucks County Concerned Citizens Against Pipelines
Christians For The Mountains
Cleveland Divestment Project
Clean Air Council
Climate Reality Pittsburgh & SWPA
Coalition Against Pilgrim Pipelines
Coalition Against Pilgrim Pipelines New Jersey
Communities First – Sewickley Valley
Doddridge County Watershed Association
Earthworks
Eight Rivers Council
Food & Water Watch
FracTracker
Free the Planet (University of Pittsburgh)
FreshWater Accountability Project
Friends of Buckingham County, Virginia
Greenbelt Climate Network
Juniata Watershed People Before Pipelines
Lancaster Against Pipelines
Local Authority Western PA (LAWPA)
Marcellus Outreach Butler
Marcellus Protest (Pittsburgh)
Marshall University Native American Student Organization
Mountain Lakes Preservation Alliance
Mountain Watershed Association
Network for Oil and Gas Accountability (NEOGAP)
NoPetroPA
Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition
Oil Change International
People Concerned About Chemical Safety
PennEnvironment
PennFuture
Project CoffeeHouse
Pennsylvania Alliance for Clean Water and Air
Protectingourwaters@gmail.com**

Responsible Drilling Alliance (RDA)
Sane Energy Project
Save the Pine Bush (Albany, NY)
South Coast Neighbors United
SPAN Ohio
Sustainable Medina County
Three Rivers Rising Tide
Virginia Interfaith Power & Light
West Virginia Chapter of Sierra Club
Women for a Healthy Environment
Women Speak Out for Peace and Justice