



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 14, 2021

Contacts:

Gillian Graber, ProtectPT – 724-392-7023, gillian@protectpt.org

Debra Smit, Breathe Project – 412-760-7677, dsmit@breatheproject.org

**Fracking Waste Injection Well Threatens Allegheny River, Pittsburgh Water
Community and Environmental Groups ask Gov. Wolf to Revoke DEP Permit**

Pittsburgh, PA – Community and environmental groups have [sent a letter](#) to Gov. Tom Wolf (attached) asking him to exercise his executive power and revoke a permit for a fracking waste disposal/injection well in Plum Boro, citing significant downstream risks to public drinking water systems, including the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority (PWSA).

The PA DEP permit for the Penneco Sedat #3A class 2 waste disposal well was issued in 2020, but new scientific information and a more detailed review of the well site have identified significant risks for toxic and radioactive contamination to both public drinking and surface water and underground aquifers. PWSA provides drinking water to more than 300,000 City of Pittsburgh residents and businesses.

"The residents of Plum Borough have been unanimous in our opposition to this disposal well at every public hearing because it is all risk and no reward for our community," stated Plum resident Matt Kelso. "Residents are worried about their well water, their streams, subsidence, earthquakes, road safety, radon gas, and more, and we are frustrated that nobody has taken our voices into consideration."

The letter to Gov. Wolf cites three main justifications for revoking the permit: engineering structural inadequacies, seismic activity and mine subsidence and radioactive contamination and cancer.

Engineering Structural Inadequacies – The Plum well was not engineered to be a waste disposal well and is susceptible to "fatigue effect" from repeated pressurization and depressurization, greatly increasing the risk of structural failures and other potential impacts.

"Unfortunately, Penneco used an inferior testing method which did not take a modern, full-length, 360-degree view of the current state of the structure of the well," said Dr. Anthony Ingraffea, Dwight C. Baum Professor of Engineering Emeritus at Cornell University. "The injection would occur only about 1000 ft. below the groundwater aquifer, which means there is a high probability of upward migration of fracking waste through defects in the well's 30-year old casing. And that presents a serious risk to well and surface water."

Seismic Activity and Mine Subsidence – The Plum community has been severely undermined from decades of coal mining. In addition to acid mine drainage impacting local streams and waterways, this well was drilled through the Renton Coal Mine, a portion of which has been on fire for many years, leaving unknown structural degradation.

Earthquakes induced by fluid injection can be extremely dangerous and have been experienced in several states. On New Year's Eve in 2011, a fracking waste injection well near Youngstown, Ohio caused a 4.0 quake that was felt across hundreds of miles. The pressure and weight created through fluid injection could exacerbate the earth's movement, and trigger seismic activity and subsidence within the extensively mined voids beneath Plum.

Radioactive Contamination and Cancer – The letter to Gov. Wolf also calls for an immediate and comprehensive investigation of fracking waste, including the high concentrations of radium which are associated with liver, breast and bone cancer. Studies (like the one currently underway at University of Pittsburgh) are needed to examine the potential link between the radium in fracking waste and the spike of rare childhood cancers, including Ewing sarcoma, in Pennsylvania's Marcellus Shale.

"Fracking has a toxic and radioactive waste problem that has never been adequately addressed and solved," stated Dr. Ned Ketyer of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Environmental Health Project. "Injecting this waste into an unstable well in close proximity to our region's drinking water source is a shortsighted and irresponsible plan, and will make people sick. It should be abandoned immediately."

Western Pennsylvania residents already suffer from some of the highest cancer rates in the country and other health challenges from decades of fossil fuel development and other industrial activities. Residents argue an injection well in Plum could further undermine residents' rights to a healthy and safe environment and Pennsylvania's constitutional right to clean air and pure water.

Speakers include:

- **Gillian Graber**, executive director of Protect PT
- **Matt Kelso**, Local Plum Resident, Manager of Data and Technology, FracTracker Alliance - Resident concerns and mine subsidence
- **Dr. Anthony Ingraffea, Ph.D., P.E.**, Dist. Member ASCE, Dwight C. Baum Professor of Engineering Emeritus and Weiss Presidential Teaching Fellow at Cornell University - Engineering inadequacies found in the permit
- **Melissa Troutman**, Research & Policy Analyst, EarthWorks, Co-Founder of Public Herald - Radioactivity in waste
- **Dr. Ned Ketyer**, M.D., F.A.A.P Physicians for Social Responsibility and Southwest Pennsylvania Environmental Health Project - Health impacts

The event will be streamed on Facebook Live via the Breathe Project page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/breatheproject>

And the ProtectPT YouTube page at:

<http://bit.ly/plum2021>