New health coalition to address threat

In light of new research on the proximity of fracking to vulnerable populations, PennEnvironment joined several health organizations to form Pennsylvania Health Professionals for a Livable Future. This coalition also includes the Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments, Physicians for Social Responsibility, SEIU Healthcare Pennsylvania and Southwest Pennsylvania Environmental Health Project.

The coalition was formed to bring the expertise of Pennsylvania’s public health community to the discussion around fracking, and promote commonsense policy solutions to address the public health threats posed by fracking.

“The places where Pennsylvania children live, learn and play shouldn’t be in the shadow of dangerous fracking activities,” said Allie DiTucci, PennEnvironment campaign organizer.

Fracking is intruding on schools

The coalition came together after PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center released its newest study on fracking, which revealed the proximity of fracking activities to Pennsylvania’s most vulnerable populations—children, senior citizens and the sick.

“Dangerous and Close” shows that there are 166 schools and 165 childcare providers within one mile of permitted fracking well sites. The study also shows that nearly 53,000 Pennsylvania children under the age of 10 live within one mile of a permitted fracking well site.

Sadly, the report showed that it’s not just children who are living in the growing shadow of fracking activity. Just weeks before the report's release, state officials announced that illegal pollution by a fracking company in Potter County, Pa., contaminated the drinking water supply for nearby private homes—and a local hospital.

Yet, the report showed that threats like this to the sick and elderly are far too common: 21 nursing homes and six hospitals in Pennsylvania are located within one mile of permitted fracking sites. In total, 28 known violations of public health regulations have occurred at wells within one mile of a Pennsylvania nursing home and 13 have occurred within one mile of a hospital.
**Recent action**

**State officials ask for your input on climate change**

Last fall, officials at the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) reached out to the state’s residents to garner their input on how the state should address climate change—and PennEnvironment jumped into action.

All told, DEP officials held 14 hearings across the state and a 60-day comment period to get the public’s input. PennEnvironment staff and volunteers took the opportunity to turn out attendees to testify at the public hearings, and to garner thousands of comments from concerned Pennsylvanians about the path forward to address global warming.

The DEP plans to hold similar hearings and comment processes in 2016 to further gauge public concern and capture input.

**Remembering what we’re fighting for**

More than 800,000 supporters like you took action to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act—and President Obama’s Clean Water Rule released last August did just that, restoring protections to 50,000 miles of streams across Pennsylvania.

On the heels of this victory, PennEnvironment members joined us to hike along Pennypack Creek, kayak at Bartram’s Garden, and plant trees along Jenkintown Creek. Getting out to enjoy the places that make Pennsylvania special serves as a great reminder of the headway we’ve made and the waters we’re fighting to protect.

But now, the historic clean water protections that you helped win have been suspended nationwide and could be overturned, due to lawsuits brought by polluters and supported by more than 20 attorneys general across the country. So in 2016, we’re helping our national federation double down on their efforts to overcome polluters’ assaults and protect this critical ruling. You’re also supporting our efforts to keep the debate focused on what this issue is really about: clean water for our families and protecting the waters we love.
After a summer where many Pittsburghers suffered through unhealthy air days and the threat of asthma attacks or other respiratory ailments, PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center released a new report last fall that identifies the 10 industrial facilities in Allegheny County releasing the most hazardous toxins into the air: the “Toxic Ten.” Among the dangers are chromium, manganese, benzene and other toxins known to cause cancer, respiratory problems, neurological disease and reproductive problems.

“One in three Allegheny County residents live within three miles of one of the county’s most dangerous industrial facilities. This staggering number reinforces a simple fact: You can’t escape pollution from the Toxic Ten,” said Stephen Riccardi, Western Pennsylvania field associate for PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center. “They pollute our air, making the communities around them sick.”

Top 10 air polluters in Pittsburgh spotlighted

Key findings of the “Toxic Ten” report include:

- Bridgeville’s Carpenter Powder Products is the most toxic facility in Allegheny County, emitting 268 pounds of hazardous chromium in 2013. It is located less than one mile away from Chartiers Valley High School and the Great Southern Shopping Center.

- Lawrenceville’s McConway & Torley Foundry, the eighth most toxic facility in Allegheny County, poses the greatest risk in terms of the number of nearby residents, with 147,562 people living within three miles of the plant.

- Two coke-producing facilities, U.S. Steel’s Clairton Plant and the Shenango Coke Works on Neville Island, ranked among the Toxic Ten due to their elevated emissions of carcinogenic benzene.

The full Toxic Ten report can be found at www.ToxicTen.org.

Pollution threatens health in Pittsburgh region

The report found that about 447,000 Allegheny County residents live within three miles of these 10 facilities, and for years, residents near many of the Toxic Ten have expressed concerns about the associated health impacts, noxious smells and other issues.

PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center and our partners in other environmental, public health and community organizations see the report as key evidence in the mounting case for Allegheny County Health Department to take stronger action against hazardous air pollution.

The report includes policy recommendations such as higher fines for violations, more stringent guidelines for permitting and increased monitoring of the facilities.

Hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians live within three miles of the worst air polluters in Allegheny County.

These facilities are within three miles of:

- 18,000–60,000 people
- 70,600 people (Shenango Coke Plant)
- 70,800 people (Holtec Manufacturing)
- 147,500 people (McConway & Torley Foundry)

PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center Western Pennsylvania Field Associate Stephen Riccardi spoke alongside concerned citizens at the release of our “Toxic Ten” report last October.
PennEnvironment sues illegal polluter

This fall, PennEnvironment filed a federal Clean Air Act lawsuit against the world’s largest steel company, ArcelorMittal, to address hundreds of ongoing violations at the company's Pittsburgh-area coke plant.

PennEnvironment’s lawsuit alleges a wide range of violations, including operating the plant for weeks at a time while a key air pollution control device was out of service; more than 225 violations of the facility’s pollution limits for hydrogen sulfide, sulfur dioxide and particulate matter; and violations so egregious that emissions have been up to eight times higher than the legally allowable limits.

“The public needs and deserves an advocate to stand up on their behalf,” said PennEnvironment Executive Director David Masur. “PennEnvironment has the track record with cases like this to get the right results for the people of Pennsylvania.”

Take action now:

To help stand up to some of Pennsylvania’s largest air polluters like the ArcelorMittal facility, take action now at: www.PennEnvironment.org

The ArcelorMittal coke plant (left), located in Monessen, Pa., faces legal action from PennEnvironment under the federal Clean Air Act.