

February 28, 2017

The Honorable Larry Hogan  
Governor, State of Maryland  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401



**RE: Support Maryland Fracking Ban Legislation**

Dear Governor Hogan:

The undersigned members of the Choose Clean Water Coalition request your support for legislation to protect the waters of Maryland and the Chesapeake Bay. Supporting SB740 and HB1325 to stop hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking,” from beginning in Maryland is critical to protecting the public health of Maryland’s citizens as well as the lifeblood of our state – our clean water and the national treasure that is the Chesapeake Bay.

The Choose Clean Water Coalition is a coalition of conservation, sportsmen, faith, and environmental groups working to restore and conserve clean water throughout the entire 64,000 square mile Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The growing body of scientific research on unconventional gas development demonstrates significant risks and harms to human health and to the environment, while providing no evidence that any regulatory framework can adequately protect Maryland residents and the Bay. Marylanders have seen the destructive impact of fracking operations on the quality of water, air, land, and health in communities around the country, including in neighboring Pennsylvania. New York also saw the negative impacts from fracking in its southern neighbor, which led to its statewide fracking ban in 2015. We urge Maryland to do the same.

There are also the economic implications of fracking. A Blue Ribbon Panel on Finance and the Chesapeake Bay was put together by the Bush Administration in 2003 and issued a very extensive and comprehensive report in 2004. This Blue Ribbon Panel estimated that the waters of the Chesapeake Bay are a regional economic engine valued at more than one trillion dollars – and that figure is over a decade old. The locations where fracking has been proposed in Maryland are known for their recreational tourism, a major source of income for local residents. Any damage to the local environment would be devastating to these communities and their local economies. This is an economic risk clearly not worth taking.

**Fracking Threatens Safe Drinking Water in Maryland**

Fracking is a serious cause of groundwater and surface water pollution. In 2016, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency concluded that fracking can contaminate drinking water.<sup>1</sup> The quality of our drinking water is impacted through leaks and spills of toxic substances, discharges of wastewater that can contain radioactive contaminants, and improper disposal of fracking

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. EPA. Hydraulic Fracturing for Oil and Gas: Impacts from the Hydraulic Fracturing Water Cycle on Drinking Water Resources in the United States (Final Report). U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, DC, EPA/600/R-16/236F, 2016. (Feb. 09, 2017, 2:48 PM)  
<https://cfpub.epa.gov/ncea/hfstudy/recordisplay.cfm?deid=332990>

chemicals or other wastes.<sup>2</sup>

Two-thirds of the 18 million people who live in the Chesapeake Bay watershed get their drinking water from the rivers and streams flowing to the Bay. The Potomac River stretches across four states (Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia) and the District of Columbia. It runs from Fairfax Stone, West Virginia directly through Western Maryland to Point Lookout, Maryland for 383 miles. The lives of more than six-million basin residents, 75 percent of whom live in the Washington metropolitan area, are touched daily by the river, which provides the majority of the region's drinking water.

The District of Columbia receives 100% of its drinking water from the Potomac River. If the Potomac River is contaminated by fracking wastewater or other sources, the nation's capital will be limited to a two-day water supply.

The Marcellus Shale formation is located in the western Maryland counties of Washington, Allegany, and Garrett. Hagerstown in Washington County gets its drinking water directly from the Potomac and supplies 90,000 people, including those in Williamsport, Smithsburg, Funkstown, and the I-81 Corridor. Fracking would be permitted beneath all drinking water reservoirs in Garrett County, as well as Deep Creek Lake. If the Potomac River is contaminated by fracking wastewater or other pollutants, this will also impact the drinking water supply for tens of thousands of people in western Maryland.

In addition, the Savage River is a significant tributary to the Potomac in western Maryland, and is home to the state's premier brook trout fishery. There are over 120 miles of interconnected streams in the Savage River watershed and it has, by far, the highest density of native brook trout in the state. This is an important area for hunters and anglers and fracking would imperil this special natural and economic resource.

Allowing fracking in Maryland is an environmental and public health risk not worth taking.

### **Allowing Fracking to Begin in Maryland will have Negative Regional Impacts**

Fracking will have a negative impact on clean water in Maryland and threaten to reverse progress made in cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay. The Bay is the largest estuary in North America, and the Potomac River is the second largest tributary to the Chesapeake.

We are concerned about the damaging impacts from natural gas drilling, including extracting, transporting, and storing. These negative impacts affect our land and water, including contamination of water resources and destruction of habitat. The watershed would be further jeopardized because fracking is exempt from significant parts of seven major federal environmental laws, including the Safe Drinking Water Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act and hazardous waste disposal standards.

For many of these reasons, New York State outlawed fracking in 2015, as did municipalities throughout our region. In Maryland, Montgomery and Prince George's counties, as well as the towns of Friendsville and Mountain Lake Park in western Maryland, have banned fracking. This is not solely a western Maryland issue, as the Taylorsville Basin extends up through southern

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<sup>2</sup> Earthworks, *Loopholes for Polluters: The oil and gas industry's exemptions from major environmental laws*, (Feb. 09, 2017, 2:38 PM) [https://www.earthworksaction.org/files/publications/FS\\_OilGasExemptions.pdf](https://www.earthworksaction.org/files/publications/FS_OilGasExemptions.pdf).

Maryland and as far north as Prince George's and Anne Arundel counties.

**Proposed Regulations are not Sufficient to Protect Health and Safety of the Public or the Natural Environment**

We are not convinced that the regulations will protect the health and safety of the public or the natural environment.

In every state that allows fracking, fracking is regulated. Yet scientific studies have found both surface and sub-surface water contamination. The majority of these environmental impacts from fracking result from cement casing failures. This is not a technical or practical failure, but a materials failure. No material can seal the surface between the steel pipes and the earth. At this point there is no available material that can be used and regulated to ensure that methane and chemicals will be contained during the fracking process.

Additionally, no regulations can prevent threats to surface and groundwater from accidental spills or from intentional dumping of waste, which has been documented in rural areas on Pennsylvania's Marcellus shale.

And due to Maryland's budgetary constraints and lack of knowledge about Maryland's geology, there is no way to learn how the migration of contaminants will effect individual or municipal water resources, and in turn human health, food supplies, and economies in Maryland communities.

The simple truth is that fracking is far too risky in our small state. We have much more to lose than we have to gain, and any cost-benefit analysis will bear that out. We request your support for bills SB740 and HB1325 to ban fracking in Maryland.

We are happy to discuss our request. Please contact Chante Coleman, [colemanc@nwf.org](mailto:colemanc@nwf.org), with any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Alliance for Sustainable Communities  
Audubon Naturalist Society  
Blue Water Baltimore  
Butternut Valley Alliance  
Cecil Land Use Association  
Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage  
Citizen Shale  
Corsica River Conservancy  
Dorchester Citizens for Planned Growth  
Earth Forum of Howard County  
Environment America  
Environment Maryland

Environment Virginia  
Friends of Frederick County  
Friends of the Bohemia  
Friends of the Middle River  
Friends of the Rappahannock  
Goose Creek Association  
Gunpowder Riverkeeper  
Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake  
Laurel Mountain Preservation Association  
Little Falls Watershed Alliance  
Maryland Conservation Council  
Maryland League of Conservation Voters  
Maryland Pesticide Education Network  
Montgomery Countryside Alliance  
Nature Abounds  
PennFuture  
Pennsylvania Council and Churches  
Potomac Riverkeeper  
Potomac Riverkeeper Network  
Savage River Watershed Association  
Shenandoah Riverkeeper  
Sparks-Glencoe Community Planning Council  
Upper Potomac Riverkeeper  
Waterkeepers Chesapeake  
West Virginia Environmental Council