



Petitions brought to DRBC
Credits: Shannon Ayala

Delaware river, a religious rallying point as drilling decisions approach

In anticipation of a [meeting](#) over gas drilling permits for land near the Delaware River, which supplies water to New York City and other cities, one of five regional press conferences was held in front of Governor Cuomo's office yesterday, involving religious figures. The issue was HVHFF (high volume horizontal hydraulic fracturing or fracking) in the Delaware River Basin. There were two religious voices amongst the speakers in Manhattan and all the while a woman meditating on the sidewalk.

"We are charged to care for the Earth in a just and sustainable way," said Sister Mary Anne Garisto, representing [New York Interfaith Power and Light](#), a religious environmental action group. Sister Garisto discussed the impacts of fracking on water and climate as well as environmental justice issues concerning people that signed leases for drilling.

"Dumping radioactive waste into our rivers and streams, into the Delaware, that is not kosher," said Rabbi Marla Feldman representing [Jews against Hydrofracking](#). "Jewish tradition teaches that natural resources belong to God and that it is our responsibility as human beings to be careful caretakers of that which God has entrusted to us," she added.

The person meditating had a large sheet sprawled on the sidewalk in front of her with the title on top: Lunch Time Silent Meditation for The Sacred Waters of New York State. Below was an explanation of fracking bordered by hearts and the words "love" and "water."

Press conferences were held in Trenton New Jersey, Philadelphia and Harrisburg Pennsylvania, Delaware and on 3rd Avenue. There has been a moratorium for three years over HVHFF in the Delaware River Basin and though states such as Pennsylvania currently allow HVHFF, it does not currently have authority on this kind of drilling that close to the Delaware River because it's an interstate issue. If chemicals used in HVHFF migrate into the Delaware River it is than potentially a problem for New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey or Delaware. Indeed it supplies drinking water to 15 million people and half of New York City's water.

There have been a series of meetings addressing the issue by the DRBC (Delaware River Basin Commission), which oversees such activity in the Basin, all of which have taken place in Trenton New Jersey, and the the upcoming meeting on November 21st will be well attended. Large groups of people for and against HVHFF have attended in the past, one time overflowing into the parking lot. This one has received particularly high publicity, most notably by Josh Fox of the film *Gasland*, in a [creative video](#).

At the press conferences, over 65 thousand petitions were delivered to the four governors and the Army Core of Engineers protesting the drilling practice in the Basin. Seven letters were signed by a coalition involving "hundreds of faith leaders, small businesses and organized labor, hunting and fishing groups, academics and student leaders, national environmental organizations and river protection groups from across the country" said Eric Weltman of Food and Water Watch.

[Governor Cuomo may vote no](#) on the DRBC's proposed regulations on fracking in the Basin, announced David Braun of United for Action. This has been reported as NYDEC Commissioner Martens spoke out against the regulations, because they may undermine and complicate standards and authority of New York State.

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Shannon Ayala, NY Environmental News Examiner
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