

## Damascus Citizens for Sustainability report for 2024

### ONGOING ACTIVITIES 2024:

- Attended meetings/hearings at the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC; the interstate regulatory agency for the Delaware River) where we submitted comments, as well as soliciting/encouraging comments from our network such as Delaware River Frack Ban and Climate Coalition, via email, website, Facebook and media. In particular, we publicized a business meeting that was held by the agency in our own backyard at Narrowsburg, NY, where topics discussed included a resolution directing staff to develop a Climate Resilience Plan that includes elements related to planning, consultation, outreach, education, and rulemaking concerning climate change. FYI, a document with DCS comments at DRBC meetings is attached.
- Interacted with members of the media and obtained media publicity regarding the issues we engage with (see Special Initiatives below for particular examples).
- Sent out information packets including our below linked posters to individuals and groups around the country, including e.g. 200 of our Upper Ohio Basin “What’s in the Water” poster to [Concerned Ohio River Residents](#). These posters are also still being used and distributed this year by the Ohio River Valley Institute and ProtectPT, to which we had previously sent 3,000.
- Responded via email and phone to the many requests for information we received from people about the fracking process, its impact on environment and health, the scientific facts about the threat it and its collateral infrastructure and waste products pose, and our expertise in means of grassroots activism.
- DCS maintained a table every Saturday at the Narrowsburg Farmers’ Market, talking to hundreds of people about oil/gas-climate and health issues, giving out written information including our [“What’s in the Water” poster](#), which portrays in graphic, easy-to-understand form the damage that fracking does to our water supply (handed out with update sheets inserted), and providing voter registration information.
- Year round, we maintained our Main Street Sustainability Storefront in Narrowsburg, NY, open Saturdays and Sundays from 12 to 3, serving as a community hub for conversation, education and ultimately grassroots advocacy about the environment, climate and threats posed not only by oil and gas drilling, but plastics, PFAS and the like.
- At the Storefront, we also hosted several sustainability sing-along programs designed to engage children, led by a musician and educator who performs interactive tunes everyone can connect, sing, and move to.

### SPECIAL INITIATIVES:

- Publicized and raised awareness of the problem of disposal of toxic fracking waste in communities via spreading so-called “brine” on roads for dust suppression or de-icing (see e.g. <https://www.damascuscitizensforsustainability.org/2024/05/18/dumped-on-do-you-live-in-a-dep-disposal-facility/>), supported especially by our ally David Hess, former secretary of the PA Department of Environmental Protection and publisher of the Pennsylvania Environmental Digest (<https://paenvironmentdaily.blogspot.com/2024/05/damascus-citizens-do-you-live-in-oil.html>) .

This work is critical because drilling wastewater, euphemistically referred to as “brine,” contains a brew of toxic chemicals. Some of these are contained in fracking fluids used to drill which then flow back out of the well bore after it is fracked, but most from layers deep in the earth, including heavy metals like arsenic and chromium, and a high degree of radioactivity in substances like radium. When it runs off the roads treated, these toxins migrate into soil and

water, threatening both human and environmental health. The radioactive substances in particular do not dissipate when they are released into the environment, but remain active and bioaccumulate in the food chain.

- Supported PA's involvement in RGGI, which is under challenge. RGGI (Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative), is a multistate market-based approach to cap and reduce CO2 emissions and compensate for fossil fuel industry damages. PA's ex-governor Tom Wolf signed the agreement, but the Commonwealth Court has since denied its legality, calling payments for damages 'fees or taxes,' meaning that only the legislature can approve them. In addition, the oil and gas industry and the pro-fossil fuel PA legislature argue that air is not subject to Article 1 Section 27 (The Environmental Rights Amendment), claiming the air is not owned by the Commonwealth but by individual property owners.

The PA Supreme Court has taken the case. [DCS has submitted to the court an amicus brief](#), constructed by our attorney Lauren Williams, who has special expertise in the area of carbon cap-and-trade systems like RGGI. The brief points out that in a cap-and-trade system like this, the sums paid by companies for carbon emission rights are not in fact taxes or fees, but payments for tradeable market goods. These payments pre-emptively cover the costs of the companies' occupation of and damages to assets commonly owned by the peoples of the state, in this case the atmosphere. Per the Pennsylvania Constitution's Environmental Rights Amendment, the state has an obligation to preserve and protect these assets for the people, now and into the future — the RGGI merely enables the state to perform that constitutionally necessary preservative function.

- Raised public awareness of and rallied the public to act regarding a "waste-to-energy" facility proposed for Sullivan County, NY—actually an incinerator with all the attendant risks. Like most places nowadays, Sullivan has a problem figuring out to do with its waste. This incinerator is being promoted as a clean, sustainable solution, but that publicity is greenwashing of an old, very dirty solution. Considered as energy generators, they are the most emissions-intensive way of generating energy, worse than coal, emitting cancer-causing dioxins and furans, the neurotoxin mercury, and a large quantity of ultra-fine particulate emissions. The particular company being considered is among the worst polluters in New Jersey, with numerous permit violations. DCS is promoting alternatives including more pre-sorting of recyclable goods by residents, using as an example the system successfully used in neighboring county Wayne, PA.

DCS publicized the risks via emails, [its website](#) and [interviews with local media](#). It also sent out a [letter and information packet to municipalities](#) in the county, explaining the risk, inviting them to meetings with us to discuss the issue and encouraging them to share their concerns with county government. This issue is still in progress.

- Raised public awareness of, and rallied the public to make comments/attending meetings regarding the preservation of a unique historical treasure on the river, the Milanville Skinners Falls Bridge, a landmarked unique Baltimore truss bridge that PennDOT appears to want to destroy and replace with a modern bridge of 40-ton capacity suitable for industrial traffic, but not suitable in the remote rural backwoods where it is located with 10-ton limits on connecting lane and a half narrow roads.
- In-person meetings with representatives of local activist groups regarding the above issues, including the Sullivan County watchdog group the Senior Legislature Advisory Group.