

For Immediate Release:

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Protect PT Shares Results of Community Survey

Protect PT shared the results of their community survey to residents around the Westmoreland Sanitary Landfill Thursday, Jan. 7. In October 2020, Protect PT sent surveys to local residents to find out how they were being impacted by the landfill. Over 110 residents responded. Several residents reported bad smells, sludge on their cars and on roadways, as well as health concerns and loss of confidence in local government to address these problems. Additionally, several residents have reported they are using bottled water or that they have installed an air filtering system in their home.

“The resilience of this community is being tested by the ongoing failures of this operator and the agencies responsible for maintaining public health and safety,” said Gillian Graber, Executive Director of Protect PT.

The Westmoreland Sanitary Landfill has been accepting drill cuttings and other fracking waste since 2010. These materials are highly toxic and often radioactive.

In June 2020, Protect PT and Mountain Watershed Association requested a public hearing after Westmoreland Sanitary Landfill applied for a permit from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to evaporate leachate (waste liquid runoff) from their site. Previously, the landfill had piped leachate to the Belle Vernon Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTW).

Dr. John Stolz, Professor of Microbiology at Duquesne University, tested leachate that Westmoreland Sanitary Landfill had piped to the Belle Vernon POTW in April 2019. This leachate tested for the same toxic constituents found in fracking, including chloride, bromide and radium. According to Dr. Stolz, radium 226 decays into other products, including Radon 222 (3.8 days), a radioactive gas, and then Lead 210 (22 years) and Polonium 210 (138 days), both also radioactive.

“In fact, if you were to seal up a container of produced water from a Marcellus Shale well, for example, in two weeks time it would be five times as radioactive due to the build up of decay products. And that is what is happening at the landfill,” Dr. Stolz said.

The Belle Vernon facility was receiving up to 300,000 gallons of leachate per day from the landfill at the time. This toxic leachate killed the microbes that were supposed to treat the

sewage. A court injunction in May 2019 stopped Westmoreland Sanitary Landfill from continuing to send leachate to the Belle Vernon POTW .

Eric Harder, the Youghiogheny Riverkeeper from Mountain Watershed Association (MWA), also spoke about the testing they have done on local waterways, including Sewickley Creek. In MWA's testing, they have found known toxic constituents such as arsenic discharged into waterways unpermitted.

"Never, in our lives, has there been a water quality concern of this magnitude, one that is knowingly contaminating our public waterways and drinking water sources with radioactive elements," said Eric Harder, the Youghiogheny Riverkeeper.

Protect PT will be conducting ongoing air quality monitoring for residents in the area. For those who would like to sign up for this program, please visit <https://www.protectpt.org/air-quality> or contact our Environmental Scientist, Kathleen Brosseau at kathleen@protectpt.org.

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About Protect PT: *Protect PT (Penn-Trafford) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring residents' safety, security, and quality of life by engaging in education and advocacy to protect the economic, environmental, and legal rights of the people in Westmoreland and Allegheny counties.*