



For Immediate Release: June 17th, 2020

Falcon Pipeline Construction Releases over 250,000 Gallons of Drilling Fluid in Pennsylvania and Ohio

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Pittsburgh, PA - An investigation by FracTracker Alliance and Fair Shake Environmental Legal Services reveals that construction of Shell Pipeline Company LP's Falcon Ethane Pipeline System has caused over a quarter million gallons of drilling fluid to be spilled in at least 70 separate incidents in Pennsylvania and Ohio. The total amount could be much larger.

Drilling fluid is used when workers drill a borehole horizontally to install a pipeline beneath a water body, road, or other sensitive location. The incidents that have occurred along the Falcon released drilling fluid both to Earth's surface and underground, and at least 2,600 gallons of drilling fluid were released in Pennsylvania waterways.

Further details and a map of these fluid losses can be found at:

<https://www.fractracker.org/2020/06/falcon-pipeline-construction-releases-over-250000-gallons-of-drilling-fluid/>

Based on documents obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, the investigation also found that weak regulations around drilling fluid spills (particularly those that occur underground), combined with the failure of Shell to accurately report incidents, have allowed for these events to largely occur without state agencies notifying the public or issuing violations.

FracTracker's 2018 Falcon Public Environmental Impact Assessment found that the pipeline passes within one-quarter mile of 240 groundwater wells and various surface drinking water surfaces, including the Ohio River, the Tappan Reservoir, and the Ambridge Reservoir, on its path to the Shell Ethane Cracker under construction in Potter Township, Pennsylvania. The pipeline also crosses over roughly 20 miles of under-mined land. While there are many remaining questions about the more-than 245,000 gallons of drilling fluids that have spilled underground during the Falcon's construction, the possibility of fluids interacting with underground voids from mines or geologic features presents a threat to drinking water sources.

“Pipeline projects in the region like the Mariner East 2 and the Rover have repeatedly demonstrated that these types of spills present very real threats to aquatic ecosystems and drinking water. Despite that, construction of the Falcon pipeline continued, during a global pandemic, without a clear framework in place to protect communities and the environment.” -Erica Jackson, Community Outreach & Communications Specialist, FracTracker Alliance

“Weak regulations established by government agencies and international corporations focused on the bottom line are putting our communities in harm's way. While the agencies and Shell could have notified the public, they spent time and money making sure they weren't required to. Our communities deserve regulations that truly protect them and partners that are looking out for their best interests.” - Josh Eisenfeld, Marketing Director, Fair Shake Environmental Legal Services

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