



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Cecilia Tkaczyk

Tkaczyk Calls on DEC to Protect Esopus River

CECILIA TKACZYK August 4, 2014

| ISSUE: **ENVIRONMENT**



State Senator Cecilia Tkaczyk delivered testimony to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) calling on the agency to protect the Lower Esopus River and put an end to New York City's discharges of muddy water from the Ashokan Reservoir into the Esopus.

"These discharges are polluting the river," Tkaczyk said, "And they are having a negative impact on the quality of life for many Ulster County residents. It is up to New York City to remediate these problems if they want to continue to use the Ashokan Reservoir without building a filtration system."

Tkaczyk said the discharges are “affecting local farmers, who are reporting that their irrigation equipment is clogging because of the mud in the water. It’s also affecting fishing and the natural beauty of the river, which is hurting tourism and recreation.”

In order to protect NYC’s drinking water supply in the Ashokan Reservoir, the City’s Department of Environmental Protection (NYC DEP) releases up to 600 million gallons of highly turbid, muddy water per day from the reservoir into the Lower Esopus Creek. Those releases have created many problems for Ulster County residents and business owners near the creek, including polluted water and an increased frequency of flooding.

New York City has been granted a Filtration Avoidance Determination, which is now up for a renewal. As part of the process, the DOH must consider revisions and accept public comment.

The State DEC must approve the amount of turbid water than can be released from the reservoir system into the local waterways, and in particular the Lower Esopus River. This approved release is granted through the State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit process.

The DEC is collecting testimony though August 22nd regarding the scope of the SPDES permit. NYC DEP is requesting a very limited review, but Tkaczyk said a complete and comprehensive review is necessary to determine the full impact the releases are having on the river and the nearby residents. She also said that all alternatives to the release should be considered, including requiring NYC to build a filtration system.

Many local environmental groups are also calling for a strict review, and Tkaczyk said local residents should get involved as well. “The DEC will be taking public comments until August 22,” Tkaczyk said. “Make sure your voice is heard.”

Comments can be addressed to NYSDEC Central Office – Division of Environmental Permits,
Attn: Stephen Tomasik, Project Manager, 625 Broadway, 4th Floor, Albany, N.Y. 12233-1750.

Comments can be sent by email to ashokan@gw.state.ny.us.

The environmental group Riverkeeper has additional information on their website:

riverkeeper.org/get-involved/take-action